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Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

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こういう漫画を描いてるせいか、
たまに「A型ですか?」と
聞かれるんですが、
作者はO型です。

勝木 光

勝木 光

Baby Steps 7

ベイビーステップ

SHONEN MAGAZINE COMICS

KCM4124

KC MAGAZINE

Baby Steps ベイビーステップ 7

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Baby Steps
7
ベイビーステップ
勝木光

Baby Steps 人物紹介

エーちゃん…丸尾栄一郎

STC所属。几帳面でマジメな優等生。軽い気持ちで始めたテニスにどっぷりハマり、ついには“プロを目指す”宣言をするまでに成長！「プロになりたい!!」次なるステップに踏み出したエーちゃん、まずは肉体改造開始！

池爽児

エーちゃんと同い年のプロ選手。日本の同世代に敵がいなくなり、戦いの場をアメリカに移した強者。ナツの幼なじみで、彼女がプロを目指すきっかけとなった人物。

江川逞

STC所属。恵まれた身体能力と技術で神奈川の頂点に君臨。プロを目指す。プレースタイルは、サーブ＆ボレー。一時は、テニスへの情熱を失いかけていたが、いまや完全復活。がむしゃらに頑張るエーちゃんに触発された!?

神奈川

関東

そして…、ライバルは全国に!!

荒谷寛

GITC所属。プレースタイルは一発逆転系のベースライナー。神奈川にタクマがいるお陰で(せいで)、子供の頃から万年2位。「タクマに勝つ」ことが原動力。

神田久志

九州の名門・柳瀬高校の1年生にしてナンバー2。安定した力強いスピン球、俊足を生かしたライジングが武器。

高橋孝介

福岡在住。スピード、パワー、スタミナを兼ね備えた身体が強みの豪快タイプ。

難波江優

東京在住。相手次第でプレースタイルは変幻自在。不得意が少なくて、データ重視という点でエーちゃんと似ているらしいが…。

住吉梓

大阪在住。超攻撃的ベースライナー。どんな状況でも攻撃一辺倒のスタイルを崩さない。

ナツ…鷹崎奈津

STC所属。エーちゃんと同じ高校に通い、学年一かわいいと評判。超ポジティブな性格で、弱気になったエーちゃんを励ます応援団であり、一緒にプロを目指す同志!! 恋の予感もあるような、ないような…!?

影山

エーちゃんのクラスメイトで、よき理解者。エーちゃんの試合は、必ず応援に行くイイ奴。

佐々木姫子

エーちゃんのクラスメイト。どうやらエーちゃんに片想い。ナツとの仲が気になるみたい!?

Baby Steps

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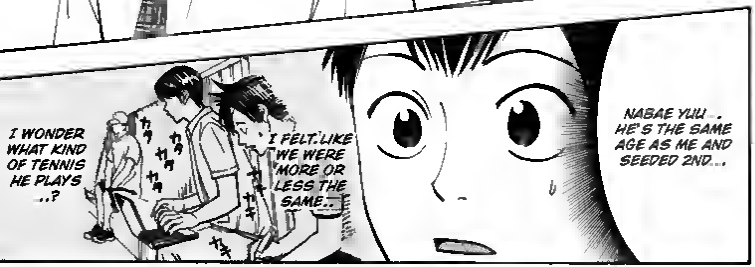
【掲載：2009年発行　週刊少年マガジン第2・3合併号～第13号】

★この物語はフィクションであり「実在の人物」団体名・出来事などとは一切関係ありません。

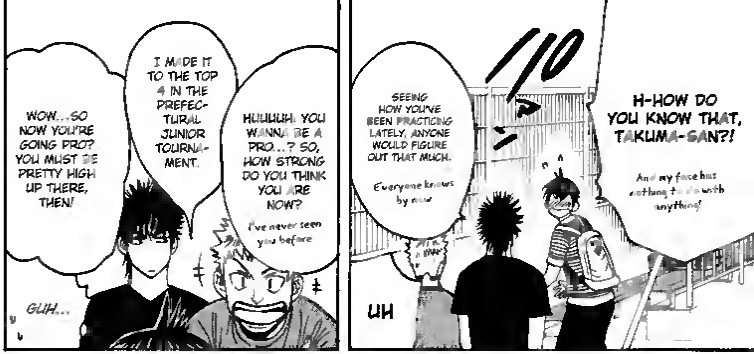
to Giant Strides

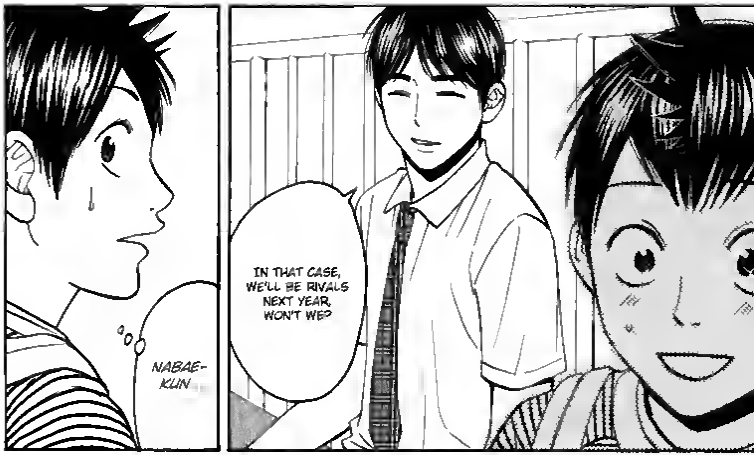
PLEASED TO MEET YOU..
THE SITE OF THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR TENNIS TOURNAMENT

#54: GRADE A


I WONDER WHAT KIND OF TENNIS HE PLAYS ..?
I FELT LIKE WE WERE MORE OR LESS THE SAME..
NABAE YUU .. HE'S THE SAME AGE AS ME AND SEEDED 2ND..

HE'S AIMING TO SHOW HIMSELF OFF AT THIS TOURNAMENT NEXT YEAR WITH A FACE LIKE THAT
AH HE PRETTY MUCH WANTS TO GO PRO
NO WAY!
IS THERE A PARTICULAR PERSON YOU'VE SET YOUR SIGHTS ON?
AH, NO, NOT AT ALL... I'M JUST HERE AS A VISITOR.
HUH?!
EVERYTHING ASIDE, THOUGH, YOU'RE RATHER PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH, AREN'T YOU, MARUO-KUN?
WELL, YOU CAN'T PARTICIPATE IN THE TOURNAMENT THIS TIME AROUND, RIGHT?


WOW...SO NOW YOU'RE GOING PRO? YOU MUST BE PRETTY HIGH UP THERE, THEN!
I MADE IT TO THE TOP 4 IN THE PREFECTURAL JUNIOR TOURNAMENT.
HUUUUH? YOU WANNA BE A PRO...? SO, HOW STRONG DO YOU THINK YOU ARE NOW?
I've never seen you before
GUH...
SEEING HOW YOU'VE BEEN PRACTICING LATELY, ANYONE WOULD FIGURE OUT THAT MUCH.
Everyone knows by now
UH
H-HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT, TAKUMA-SAN?!
And my face has nothing to do with anything!


NABAE-KUN
IN THAT CASE, WE'LL BE RIVALS NEXT YEAR, WON'T WE?

I'LL GO OBSERVE THE SEEDED PLAYERS WANT TO JOIN ME?
HEY MARUO-KUN
SAME HERE
TAKUMA, IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR ME TO HEAD OUT
OKAY THEN SEE YOU LATER, MARUO-KUN!

WE CAN TRADE INFORMATION.
I'D LIKE TO KNOW SOME THINGS ABOUT EGAWA-KUN'S RECENT FORM AND SO ON.
THAT GUY IS THE 1ST SEED FOR THIS TOURNAMENT! TAKAHASHI KOUSUKE FROM FUKUOKA.
HIS PHYSICAL STRENGTH FAR SURPASSES HIS SPEED, POWER, AND STAMINA COMBINED. HE'S WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL THE STRONG-ARMED TYPE
HAH!
THIS WILL BE THE THIRD TIME HE'S PARTICIPATED IN THE TOURNAMENT, BUT HE HASN'T REALLY IMPROVED MUCH. I HONESTLY DON'T THINK HE'LL MAKE MUCH OF AN IMPACT FROM THE VERY START.
I GET THE FEELING HE'S A RIGHT-HANDED ARAYA, AND EVEN STRONGER ON TOP OF THAT.

TAKE THAT!
THEN THERE'S THE 3RD SEED, SUMIYOSHI AZUSA FROM OSAKA - AN AGGRESSIVE BASE-LINE PLAYER.
ONE OF HIS STRONG POINTS IS THAT NO MATTER WHAT THE SITUATION HE WILL ALWAYS ATTACK WITHOUT WAVERING OR FALLING APART
WITH JUST THAT, HIS ATTACK PATTERNS ARE FRIGHTENINGLY VARIED. IN DISADVANTAGEOUS SITUATIONS, HE'LL STRING TOGETHER ONE ATTACK WITH ANOTHER, AND HAS SEVERAL DEATHBLOW ATTACKS IN HIS ARSENAL
WHEN ON DEFENSE NO MATTER WHO THE OPPONENT
IRRESPECTIVE OF MATCH POINTS AND THE LIKE HE CAN WIN WITH EASE

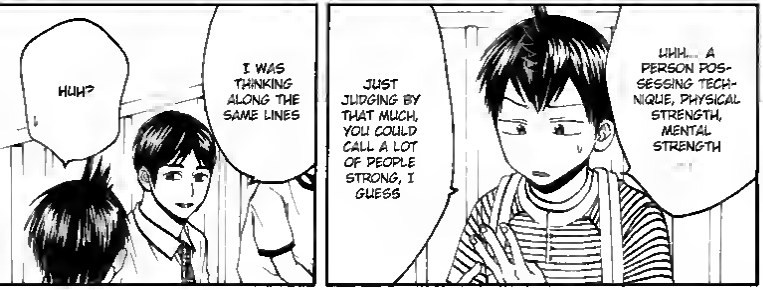
SO THEY DON'T REALLY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU, MARUO-KUN.
WELL, THOSE TWO ARE THIRD YEARS AND WON'T BE IN NEXT YEAR'S TOURNAMENT.
HIS VIEW FROM ABOVE IS REALLY AMAZING.
Not to mention he seeded higher than them, too.
HE'S EVEN GOT SOME ONE-SHOTS TO BACK HIM UP, TOO, BUT THOSE ARE JUST HASSLES TO DEAL WITH.
カタ カタ カタ

IKE SOUJI!!
EGAWA-KUN WAS ORIGINALLY THE STRONGEST IN THE PREVIOUS GENERATION,
BUT IKE SOUJI SHOWED UP LIKE A COMET,
AND EGAWA-KUN EVENTUALLY STOPPED ENTERING.
NOW THERE'S THE 4TH SEED, EGAWA-KUN.
IKE-KUN'S OVERWHELMING POWER WAS SHOCKING FOR ME AS WELL, BUT I SOON REORIENTED MYSELF.
SINCE EGAWA-KUN WAS ALWAYS LEADING THE WAY WITH HIS HALF-HEARTED BUT EXCEPTIONAL TALENT, I BELIEVE THAT HE JUST COULDN'T DEAL HANDLE BEING BEATEN
SO IF HE'S REALLY MAKING A COMEBACK HERE THE WINNER OF THIS TOURNAMENT WILL MOST ASSUREDLY BE EGAWA-KUN, IN MY OPINION.
I'M SLIGHTLY GLAD ABOUT THAT
THE COACH WENT AS FAR AS TO SAY TAKUMA-SAN'S CONDITION WAS PRETTY GOOD. HE EVEN WORKED REALLY HARD ON THE TRAINING HE HATES SO MUCH.
TRAINING...? WHAT ELSE DID HE DO?
LET'S SEE... I THINK IT WAS MOSTLY COVERING THE BASICS.
I SEE.
HM?

				Egawa Takuma	Kanda
Mentality	Strength of Mind			B	B
	Power of Judgement			B	B
	Strategic Ability			B	A
Technique	Stroke	Forehand	Topspin	B	A
			Flat	A	A
			Slice	A	
		Backhand	Topspin	B	
			Flat	B	
			Slice	A	
	Serve	Foreside	Spin	A	
			Flat	A	
			Slice	A	
		Backside	Spin	A	
			Flat	A	

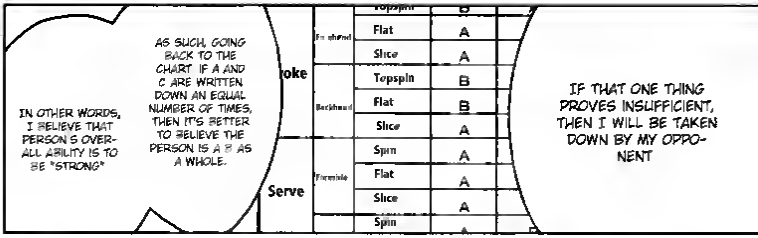
I'M TRYING TO GATHER VARIOUS BITS OF DATA IN ADVANCE, FOR WHEN I PLAY AGAINST OTHER ATHLETES FAR MORE CAPABLE THAN ME.
THAT WAY, I CAN SEE WHICH AREAS I SHOULD CHALLENGE ASIDE OF THEIR PHYSICAL ABILITIES, OR RATHER, THEIR STRENGTHS.

MARUO-KUN, WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO YOU THINK IS STRONG AT TENNIS?
HUH, STRONG?

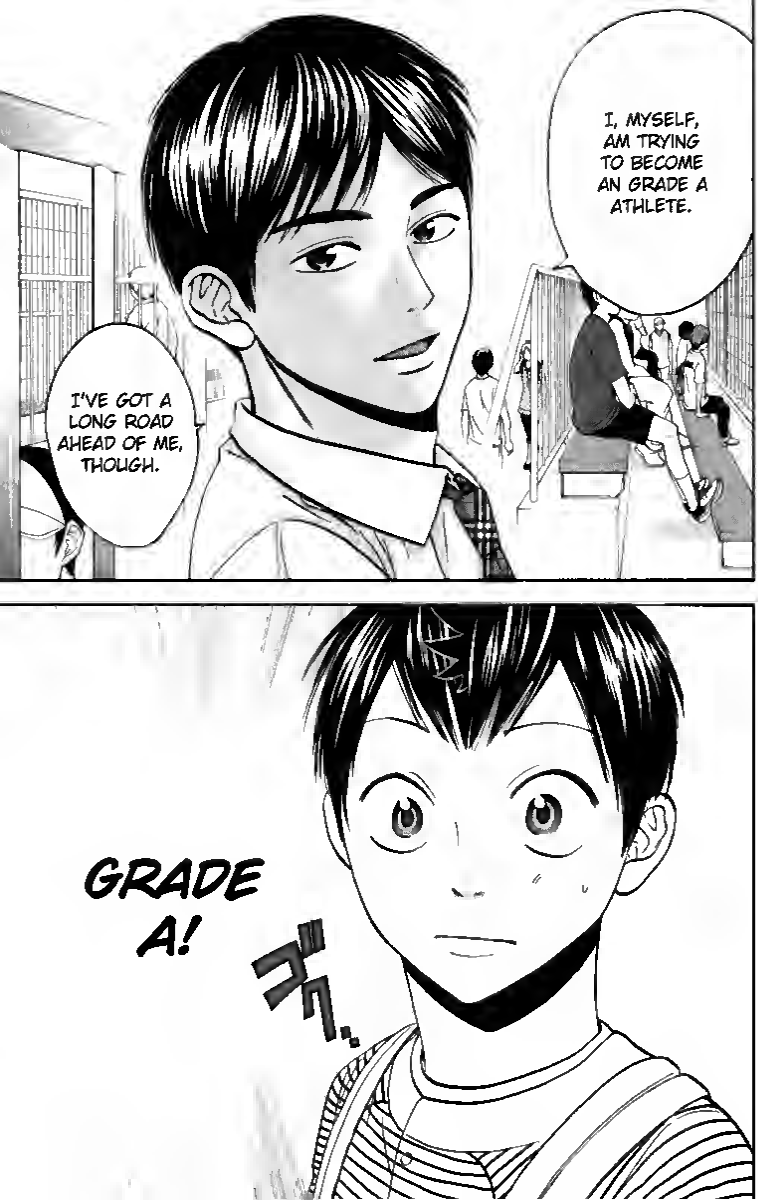

UHH... A PERSON POSSESSING TECHNIQUE, PHYSICAL STRENGTH, MENTAL STRENGTH
JUST JUDGING BY THAT MUCH, YOU COULD CALL A LOT OF PEOPLE STRONG, I GUESS
I WAS THINKING ALONG THE SAME LINES
HUH?

WITH TENNIS, IT'S A MATTER OF ONE PERSON COMPETING TO CHASE AROUND A BALL HIT AT AROUND 200 KM/H FOR THREE HOURS OR MORE INSIDE A 10 METERS SQUARED BOX, RIGHT?
AND ALL OF A SUDDEN, WE'RE DEBATING POINTS OF TENNIS...
SO, IN OTHER WORDS, TENNIS...

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE EXPLOSIVE POWER OF RUNNING A SHORT TEN METERS, LIKE IN SPRINTING.
IT'S A LONG THREE HOURS OF ENDURANCE, LIKE RUNNING A MARATHON.
IT'S USING QUICK JUDGMENT TO PERCEIVE A FAST 200 KM/H BALL, LIKE A MAJOR LEAGUE BATTER.
ASIDE OF THOSE POINTS, THERE'S THE TECHNIQUE OF CHOOSING BETWEEN THE MULTITUDE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF HITS. HAVING CONTROL OF THE BALL IS LIKE BEING ABLE TO PASSING THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE.
THEN THERE'S THE ABILITY OF STRATEGIZING ON HOW TO COMBINE ALL THESE TECHNIQUES IN A MATCH.
AND SO, HAVING THE STRENGTH OF MIND TO PLAY BY ONESELF AND FREELY USE THOSE VARIOUS ABILITIES BECOMES THE MOST IMPORTANT THING OF ALL.

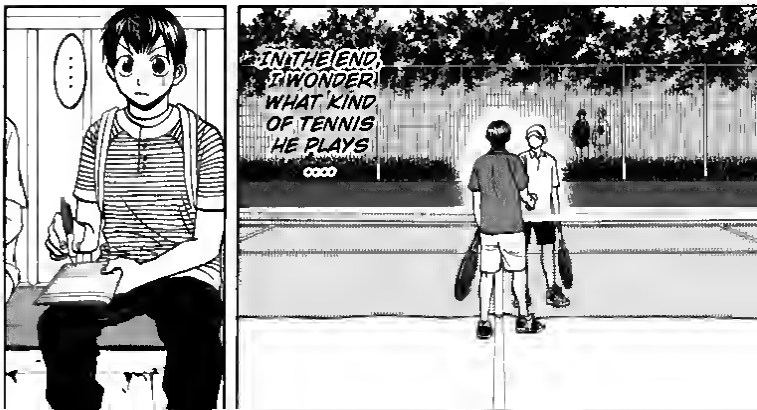

IF THAT ONE THING PROVES INSUFFICIENT, THEN I WILL BE TAKEN DOWN BY MY OPPONENT
AS SUCH, GOING BACK TO THE CHART. IF A AND C ARE WRITTEN DOWN AN EQUAL NUMBER OF TIMES, THEN IT'S BETTER TO BELIEVE THE PERSON IS A B AS A WHOLE.
IN OTHER WORDS, I BELIEVE THAT PERSON'S OVERALL ABILITY IS TO BE "STRONG"
Topspin B
Flat A
Slice A
Topspin B
Flat B
Slice A
Spin A
Flat A
Slice A
Spin

WITHOUT COMPROMISING ON A SINGLE IDEAL,
RAISE UP YOUR ENTIRE LEVEL TO A.

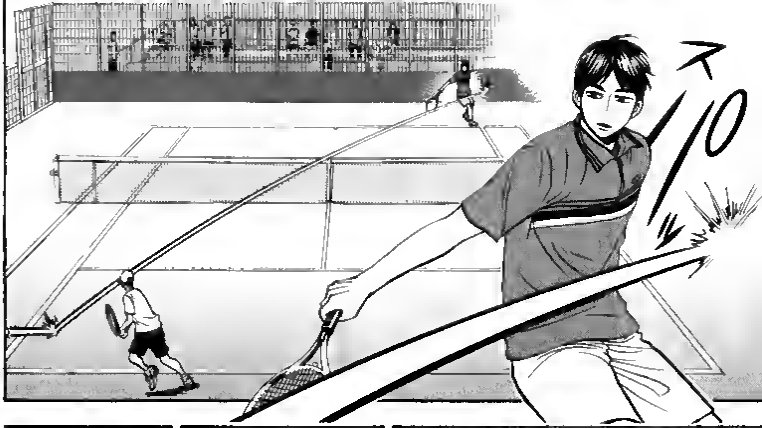

I, MYSELF, AM TRYING TO BECOME AN GRADE A ATHLETE.
I'VE GOT A LONG ROAD AHEAD OF ME, THOUGH.
GRADE A!
ゴク…

I... I SEE.
THIS IS MY OWN PERSONAL THEORY, DOWN TO THE VERY LAST PART, SO I'M HAPPY YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHERE I'M GOING WITH THIS.
WELL, I THOUGHT YOU'D UNDERSTAND, WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT IT UP IN THE FIRST PLACE.
TAKENARA-KUN AND NABAE-KUN ON COURT 2.
AH, I'VE GOT TO GET GOING.
THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING!
NO, NO, THANK YOU.

GRADE A....


....
IN THE END, I WONDER WHAT KIND OF TENNIS HE PLAYS.

3 SET MATCH! NABAE SERVES! ALL PLAY!
HUH? THAT'S SURPRISING. IT'S A FAIRLY NORMAL.
HAH!
HAH!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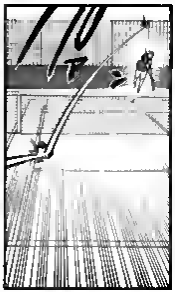
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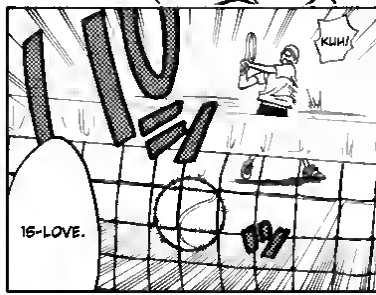
BUT HE GOT A POINT OFF OF IT...
AND HE EFFICIENTLY HIT OVER AN AWKWARD BACKHAND STROKE
His slice was really pretty too.


KUH!
15-LOVE.

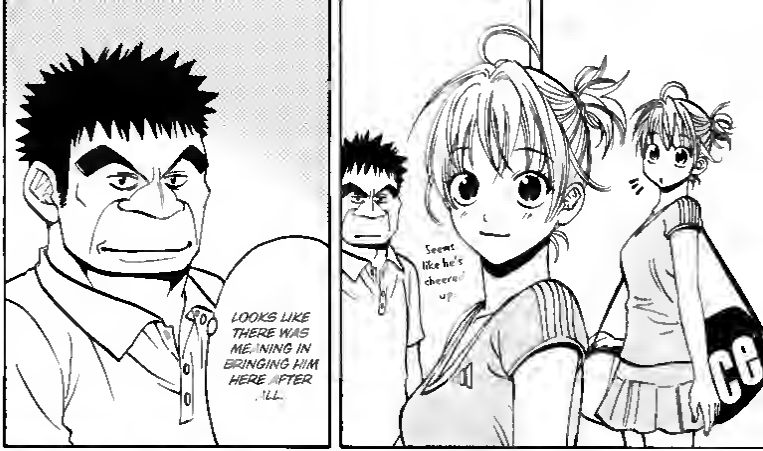
110
イン
OUT!
30-LOVE.

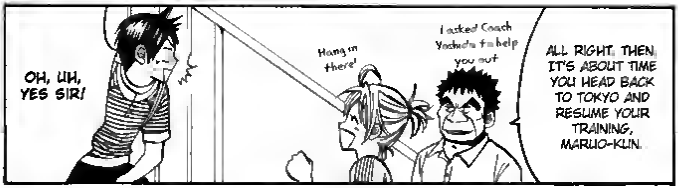
OH, NABAE'S CLOSING IN ON THE FRONT OF THE COURT!

I DON'T REALLY GET WHY NABAE'S SO STRONG, ACTUALLY.
WHEN I FIRST SAW HIM, I THOUGHT THAT EVEN I COULD BEAT HIM.
YOU'RE RIGHT. HE'S GOOD, BUT HE DOESN'T HAVE THE PRESENCE OF A 2ND SEED.
NO...HIS OPPONENT DIDN'T JUST MISS.
NABAE-KUN FORCED HIM TO MISS.
HE OPENED WITH A STRAIGHT, AND HIT A DIFFICULT BALL IN A DIFFICULT TRAJECTORY WITH AN AWKWARD BACKHAND.
THIS TIME, HE SERVED QUICKLY WITH A DIFFERENT BALL ONTO THE SAME TRAJECTORY!
NO... IT WASN'T FAST... THE DIFFERENCE IN SPEED WAS SO GREAT THAT IT JUST APPEARED THAT WAY...
UGH!
HIS EXPRESSION NEVER CHANGES, SO IT'S HARD TO TELL
HE'LL CONTINUE THROUGH THE MATCH, ONE BALL AFTER THE OTHER.
40-LOVE.

AT A GLANCE, IT SEEMS SIMPLE, BUT IT'S EFFICIENT AND NOTHING IS WASTED.
THIS IS THE TENNIS OF NABAE-KUN, SOMEONE TRYING TO BE A GRADE A ATHLETE.
EI-CHAN!
O-OH YEAH? GOOD LUCK!
IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR MY MATCH!
YEP!
OH, NACCHAN! COACH!

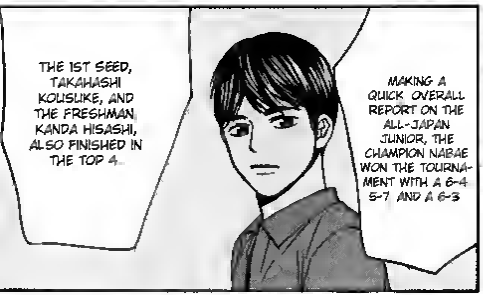
YEAH... WE BOTH LOST. THE ONLY PEOPLE FROM KANAGAWA WE'VE GOT LEFT TO CHEER ON ARE TAKUMA-SAN AND ARAYA-KUN, I GUESS.
AH... MIYAGAWA-KUN AND OOBAYASHI-KUN... YOU TWO FINISHED YOUR MATCHES?
AH. I SEE A MARUO-KUN!
THESE TWO LOST AFTER JUST ONE MATCH ?
SO THIS IS THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR...


LOOKS LIKE THERE WAS MEANING IN BRINGING HIM HERE AFTER ALL.
Seems like he's cheered up.


OH, UH, YES SIR!
Hang in there!
I asked Coach Yabuki to help you out
ALL RIGHT. THEN, IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU HEAD BACK TO TOKYO AND RESUME YOUR TRAINING, MARUO-KUN.

ALL RIGHT...I'M DEFINITELY COMING HERE NEXT YEAR!
THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR...

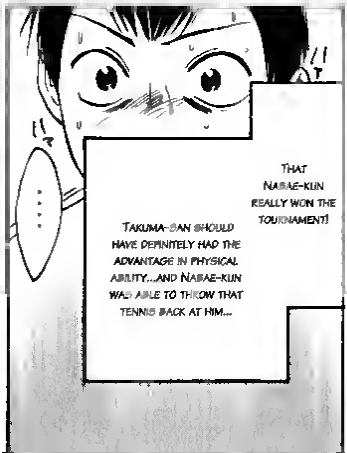
ONE WEEK LATER
ANIKI! ANIKI!


THE 1ST SEED, TAKAHASHI KOUSUKE, AND THE FRESHMAN, KANDA HISASHI, ALSO FINISHED IN THE TOP 4.
MAKING A QUICK OVERALL REPORT ON THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR, THE CHAMPION NABAE WON THE TOURNAMENT WITH A 6-4 5-7 AND A 6-3

Naechan was in the Top 4.
HUH? TAKUMA-SAN LOST IN THE FINALS AND CAME IN SECOND?!

I SEE...

NABAE'S A TOKYO REPRESENTATIVE, SO HE'LL PROBABLY SHOW UP IN THE KANTOU TOURNAMENT YOU'RE AIMING FOR.

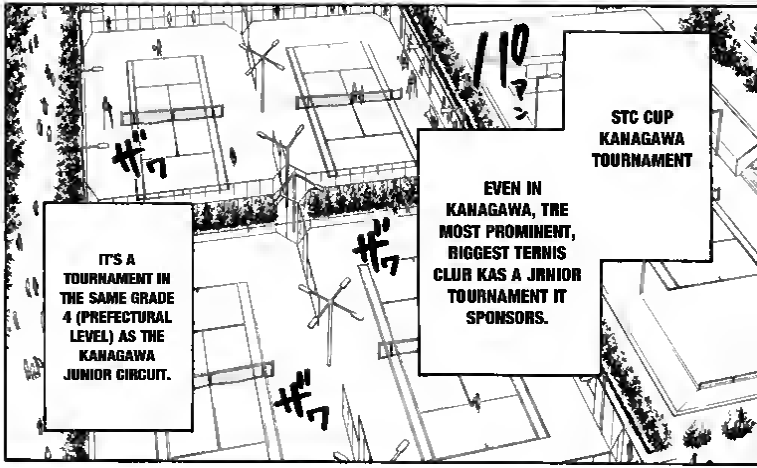

...
TAKUMA-SAN SHOULD HAVE DEFINITELY HAD THE ADVANTAGE IN PHYSICAL ABILITY...AND NABAE-KUN WAS ABLE TO THROW THAT TENNIS BACK AT HIM...
THAT NABAE-KUN REALLY WON THE TOURNAMENT!

OKAY...ONE MORE MONTH. I'VE DEFINITELY GOT TO GET BETTER THAN THIS!
AND SO CONTINUED HIS HELLISH BODY TRANSFORMATION...
OCTOBER – MORE THAN EVER, THE BEGINNING OF HIS JOURNEY TOWARDS BECOMING A PRO
THE STC CUP KANAGAWA TOURNAMENT IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!
August
All Japan Junior Indoor
Kanagawa Prefecture Tennis To
Kantou Junior Tennis Tournam
All Japan Junior Tennis Tourn

#55: IN PROGRESS

ALL RIGHT, THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY!
THIS MARKS THE END OF YOUR TWO MONTHS!
I... MADE IT!

AH...YES, SIR! ALL THANKS TO YOU!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
K.KINGDOM
YOU WORKED HARD.
YOU'RE A LITTLE MORE CONFIDENT IN YOURSELF NOW, AREN'T YOU?
OH BEFORE YOU GET OVERCOME BY EMOTION, I'D LIKE TO CHECK UP ON SOMETHING FIRST
AH, YUKICHI-KUN, NACCHAN
EI-CHAN, YOU DID IT!
ANIKI! GOOD JOB!
AH, YES, SIR!
ARAYA, MIYAGAWA, AND ALL THE OTHER TOP CONTESTANTS IN THE PREFECTURE WON'T BE PARTICIPATING SO CUT YOUR WAY INTO THE FIELD AS A SHINING NEW STAR AND WIN MATCH AFTER MATCH STAY FOCUSED
JUST AS WE PLANNED, YOU'LL PLAY IN A TOURNAMENT
YOU HAVE THREE DAYS OFF STARTING TOMORROW



	23	萩尾 宏治	(テニスビジョンJTA)
⑥	24	長岡 武典	(DCS)
⑧	25	丸尾栄一郎	(STC)
	26	佐藤 尚人	(南稜)
	27	田辺 恒	(ミナミカワTC)
	28	酒井 ただし	(相模湘南GTC)
	29	片瀬 幸一	(鎌倉学院)
			(宮川T. A.

もぐ
もぐ
THIS IS PROBABLY THE BEST CHANCE I'LL HAVE
THIS TIME ARAYA-KUN OOBAYASHI-KUN MIYAGAWA-KUN AND IWASA-KUN WON'T BE HERE
THE 1ST SEED IS TERASHIMA HAYATO-KUN
I BEAT HIM IN THE KANGAWA JUNIOR CIRCUIT
IN THIS CONDITION ...
...AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I'D LIKE TO THINK...
ズン
ニー
I'M AT THE END OF MY ROPES HERE...
I'M HURTING ALL OVER...AND MY BODY'S EXHAUSTED
GOING INTO THE MATCH UNPREPARED AND IN MY CURRENT CONDITION REALLY SUCKS
I HAVEN'T HAD TIME TO WATCH ANY OF SATOU-KUN PREVIOUS GAMES. I HAVE NO DATA ON HIM
NO.25 MARO-KUN AND NO.26 SATOU-KUN, PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY TO COURT 3.
ビクッ
WHOA!
OUT OF THE FRYING PAN AND INTO THE FIRE
ﾏﾛ
ﾏﾛ

1 SET MATCH! MARUO SERVES! ALL PLAY!
HE SUDDENLY GOT SEEDED... I'VE GOT THE WORST LUCK.
LET'S GO WATCH.
HEY, IT'S MARUO, THE 8TH SEED.
THE GUY WHO BEAT MIYAGAWA AND IWASA IN THE LAST TOURNAMENT?
ピキッ
UGH!

OWOW!
LOVE-15.
HMP HIS MOVEMENT IS A BIT WEIRD
I CAN'T DO THIS! MY BODY'S SQUEEZED TOGETHER WITH PAIN!
AH
15-ALL.
15-30.
OUT! 15-40.
@UH!

KUH!
OH MAN!
GAME 1-O, SATOU LEADS.
MY BODY'S SO HEAVY AND I CAN'T REACT...
HUH? I CAN WIN THIS MATCH?
WHOA NOW, IS HE OKAY? NEVER THOUGHT A SEEDED PLAYER'S MATCH WOULD BE THIS AWKWARD
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THIS IS BAD) I'M NERVOUS AND CAN'T MOVE AT ALL A VICIOUS CIRCLE I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING
ヨタ
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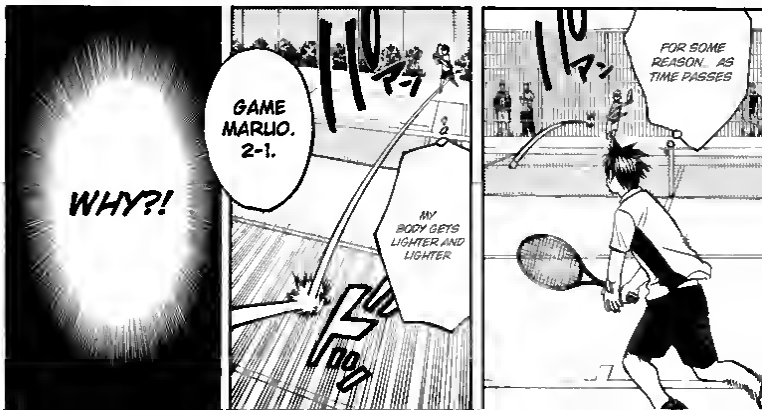
AT TIMES LIKE THESE I'VE GOT TO REMEMBER BACK TO WHEN I WAS IN GOOD CONDITION
AHH! NOTHING BUT THAT HELLISH PRACTICE POPS UP!
AND SO CONTINUED HIS TRYING BODY TRANSFORMATION...

I'M IN NO POSITION TO BE TALKING ABOUT THAT!
...NO, THIS CAN'T GO ON.
HUH!
HAH!

GAME, MARUO. 1-1.
15-ALL.
15-LOVE.

HUH ...?
HAH!


WHY?!
GAME MARUO. 2-1.
MY BODY GETS LIGHTER AND LIGHTER
FOR SOME REASON, AS TIME PASSES

GAME MARUO. 4-1, MARUO LEADS.
WHOA. SEEMS LIKE HIS GAME'S COMING BACK.
WELL, IF IT GOES ON LIKE THIS, I BET THE SKILL DIFFERENCE WILL SHOW MORE AND MORE.
GAME SET WON BY MARUO, 6-1.
OH YEAH!
I knew I'd lose
LOOKS LIKE YOU MADE A BREAK-THROUGH IN YOUR FIRST MATCH.
OH, COACH
I WAS WONDERING WHAT I SHOULD DO AT FIRST,
BUT FOR SOME REASON, I WAS ABLE TO MOVE MORE AND MORE BIT BY BIT. SAVED MY LIFE.

IT'S CALLED "ACTIVE REST".

YOU MAKE LIGHT MOVEMENTS SO THAT THE LACTIC ACID AND SIMILAR SUBSTANCES PERMEATING IN YOUR MUSCLES CAN FLOW THROUGH YOUR BLOOD STREAM.

COMPARED TO STAYING STILL AND SLEEPING, YOU CAN MAKE A MUCH FASTER RECOVERY.

TO EFFECTIVELY RECOVER AN EXHAUSTED BODY, YOU SHOULD MOVE AROUND A MODERATE AMOUNT.

IF YOU GET PAST THIS, IT WILL ONLY GET MORE INTERESTING.

HUH?

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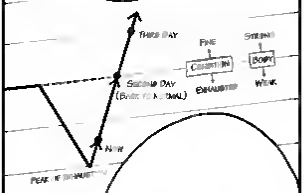
AFTER THE THIRD DAY,

YOUR ONCE BROKEN BODY WILL START REBUILDING ITSELF IN ORDER TO PREVENT ITSELF FROM GETTING DESTROYED LIKE THAT AGAIN.



YOUR SKELETAL STRUCTURE, MUSCLES AND CARDIOPULMONARY FUNCTIONS WILL FAR SURPASS YOUR PREVIOUS ONES AND YOU WILL START GETTING STRONGER.

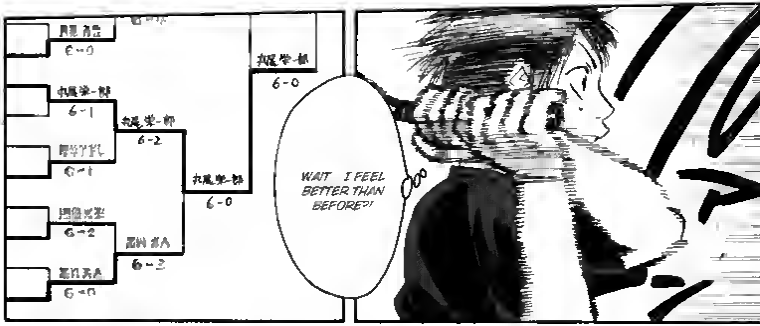
THE SECOND DAY, TOMORROW, MORE OF YOUR EXHAUSTION WILL GO AWAY AND YOU'LL BE THAT MUCH CLOSER TO YOUR RESTED AND FULLY RECOVERED STATE.

IT'S ONLY BEEN A DAY SINCE YOU WERE FREED FROM THAT BODY TRANSFORMATION PRACTICE.

THIS IS MERELY A STAIRCASE WHERE YOUR EXHAUSTION IS DISSOLVING BIT BY BIT FROM WHAT'S BEEN ACCUMULATED

IN OTHER WORDS, YOUR BODY TRANS-FORMATION
IS CURRENTLY PROGRESSING AS YOU PLAY IN YOUR MATCHES.
ゴリ
MATCH 2. NO.25 MARUO-KUN AND NO.28 SAKAI-KUN, PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY TO COURT 4.

IF I CAN MOVE THIS MUCH, I'LL BE ABLE TO PLAY THE THIRD MATCH LIKE I AM NOW!
HE WAS RIGHT... MY EXHAUSTION'S GOING AWAY


WAIT... I FEEL BETTER THAN BEFORE?!

DAY 3, FINALS.

KUH!
WHOOOOA?!
WHAT IS THIS?!
MY BODY FEELS SO LIGHT!

IT'S REALLY EASY TO ADJUST MY SHOTS SINCE THE RACKET IS REALLY LIGHT, TOO!
THE BALL'S LIGHT, SO I CAN EASILY CONTROL MY SWINGS!
IT FEELS LIKE MY LEGS WERE REPLACED WITH FEATHERS!
STRENGTHENING THE BODY MAKES HITTING THE SPOT I AM AIMING FOR THAT MUCH EASIER!

HAH!
HE'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM 3 MONTHS AGO
WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED?!
IN THAT CASE, ONE'S MENTALITY GETS MORE ROOM TO GROW
IF THE BODY IMPROVES, THEN NATURALLY, IT IMPROVES THE ABILITIES AS WELL.
STC

GAME, SET, MATCH. WON BY MARUO. COUNT 6-1, 6-0.

HA
#56: JUST GETTING STARTED
TWO MONTHS AFTER STARTING THE BODY TRANSFORMATION
GAME SET, AND MATCH WON BY MARUO. COUNT: 6-1 6-0.

I won the STC Cup, Kanagawa Competition!!
YES!!
IT WAS NEITHER A FLUKE NOR LUCK.
I WON WITH MY OWN STRENGTH!!
I...I....I WON!!
I WAS WATCHING.
COACH!!
CONGRATULATIONS, MARUO-KUN.

THE LAST TWO MONTHS HAVE BEEN REALLY TOUGH, BUT I'M SO GLAD THAT I WENT THROUGH WITH IT.
I SEE. I SEE.
WHY'S HE SO EXCITED EVEN THOUGH HE'S THAT STRONG?
I don't get it
SO YOU WERE ABLE TO FEEL THE EFFECTS OF THE BODY TRANSFORMATION

YE-... YES.
I LEARNED THAT IF MY BODY MOVES ACCORDING TO MY WILL, THE BALL WILL ALSO GO EXACTLY WHERE I WANT.
ALSO, EVEN IF I GOT PHYSICALLY TIRED OR MENTALLY STRESSED, THE 20 SECOND INTERVAL WAS ENOUGH TO GET ME FULLY RECOVERED, SO I WAS ABLE TO KEEP ON PLAYING IN A FRESH CONDITION.

ALL RIGHT, THEN THE 1ST HURDLE IS CLEARED.
1ST HURDLE?
THAT'S RIGHT.
WELL EVEN IF I SAY THAT, IT'S NOT THAT DIFFERENT FROM WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING SO FAR
DURING THE ONE MONTH PERIOD BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT COMPETITION WE'LL ONCE AGAIN TEAR APART YOUR BODY THAT'S BEEN STRENGTHENED FROM THE BODY TRANSFORMATION

!!
YYOU'LL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TRAINING WHILE MAINTAINING A BODY REQUIRED TO LIVE AS AN ATHLETE
BY SUSTAINING THIS 5 WORK 2 REST CYCLE FOREVER,
IN THE END WE'LL SETTLE ON A CYCLE OF BREAKING YOUR BODY FOR 5 DAYS AND LETTING IT RECOVER OVER TWO.
THEN, WE'LL BREAK THAT EVEN STRONGER BODY OF YOURS OVER TWO WEEKS, AND GIVE IT 4~5 DAYS TO RECOVER.
AND THIS TIME, WE'LL LET IT RECOVER OVER A ONE WEEK PERIOD
A BODY REQUIRED TO LIVE AS AN ATHLETE....
AH... YES, SIR!!
BUT BEFORE THAT, GO AND RECEIVE YOUR WELL-DESERVED PRIZE.
とんっ
ALL RIGHT! NEXT IS FINALLY THE KANTOU PRELIMINARY SELECTION

I WAS ABLE TO FINISH WITH THE BEST RESULT ON MY VERY FIRST COMPETITION AFTER DECIDING TO BE A PRO

STC CUP, KANAGAWA PREFECTURE COMPETITION

1ST PLACE MARUO EIICHIRO-KUN

2ND PLACE TERASHIMA HAYATO-KUN

RIGHT AROUND THAT TIME, MY SCHOOL WAS HOSTING THE CULTURAL FESTIVAL.

A BRIEF INTERVAL OF PEACEFUL, BASIC TRAINING

MY NUMBER ONE PRIORITY FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK WAS TO RECOVER MY STAMINA BEFORE GOING INTO THE HELLISH BODY TRANSFORMATION

AT 11AM, THE ORCHESTRA CLUB WILL BE HOLDING A CONCERT AT THE FIELD....

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR COMING TO THE OOSUGI FESTIVAL TODAY.

ザワ
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THEN, MARUO-KUN, YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF THIS POSITION.
ALL RIGHT.
I JUST HAVE TO HAND OUT THE PAMPHLETS TO THE VISITORS, RIGHT?
実行
実行
IF THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE I CAN DO, PLEASE LET ME KNOW.
I WASN'T ABLE TO HELP MUCH WITH THE PREPARATIONS BECAUSE OF PRACTICE
...
S-... SORRY.
I WAS THE ONE WHO WENT TO ALL THE MEETINGS... SO MARUO-KUN, YOU HAVE NO CLUE WHAT'S GOING ON, RIGHT?
EVEN IF YOU SAY THAT!
Ha ha ha you're so soft on scolding!

I BETTER WORK HARD
YOU CAN GO PICK UP SOME GYOZA/ICE IF YOU FIND ANY
I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO CAUSE SI-CHAN'S BUSY WITH WORK. SO IS THERE ANYTHING FOR ME?
OKAY THEN, I'LL BE BACK LATER
NO IT'S OKAY I KNOW HOW HARD MARUO-KUN'S WORKING ON TENNIS
INSIDE
PAMPHLETS
本部
PAMPHLETS
カタ-ン
MY STOMACH'S STARTING TO GROWL~
PHEW~ THAT'S IT FOR NOW

TA-DAAAAA
HERE ARE SOME TREATS~~
HEHE HOW IS IT?
It's the costume for our class store
NA-NACCHAN!? WHA...WHAT'S UP WITH THAT OUTFIT!?
IT-..IT LOOKS GOOD
THEN WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AWAY?
CALM DOWN AMOUNT OF EXPOSURE SHOULDN'T BE THAT DIFFERENT FROM HER TENNIS WEAR

YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M IN THE SAME BOAT...
HEY, LOOK.
SINCE I WASN'T INVOLVED IN THE FESTIVAL PREPARATION AT ALL, I SHOULD HELP OUT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, RIGHT?
2-1
OF COURSE
COVER GIRL
GEEZ, IT WAS SO HARD TO SNEAK OUT OF THE PLACE
AH, YEAH. THANKS.
WELL, DIG IN, DIG IN.
Which one do you want?
IF I HADN'T STARTED PLAYING TENNIS, THERE'S NO WAY SHE'D BE SITTING NEXT TO ME RIGHT NOW...
THAT'S RIGHT.... SHE'S THE RUMORED CUTEST GIRL OF OUR SCHOOL....

AND WHEN I TOLD THEM I'D TAKE SOME TREATS TO EI-CHAN,
EVERYONE KEPT SAYING STUFF LIKE "YOU'RE LIKE EI-CHAN'S GIRLFRIEND NOW."
ゴク

ERE, WA-, WATER... JUICE!
ゴクゴク

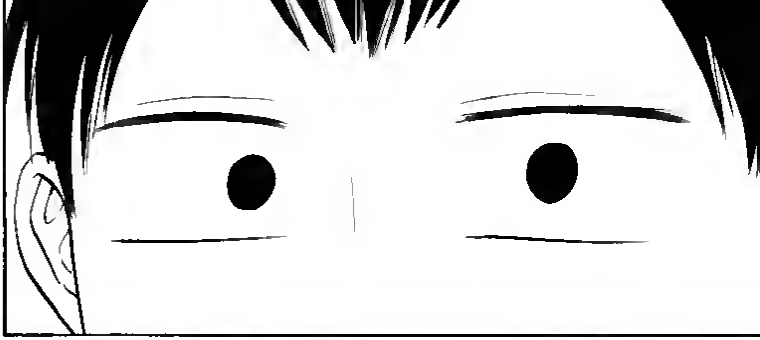
WAI... WAIT, ARE YOU OKAY!?
ゴボ
ゴボ

RGH!
CH

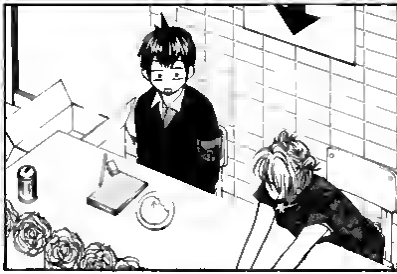
EH...

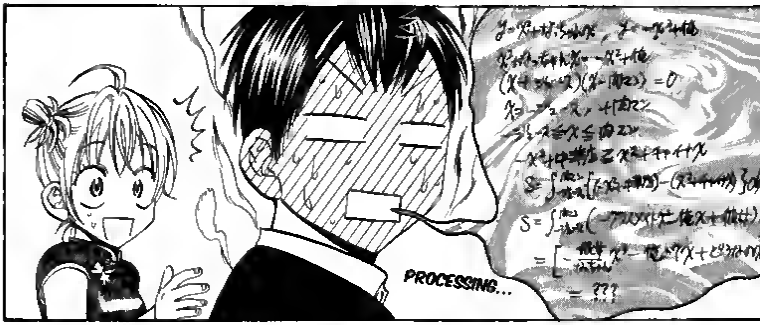
SO, NACCHAN, HOW DID YOU REPLY!?

EEH
SECRET ~~~~~
THEN,
WHAT DID YOU WANT ME TO SAY?



EI-CHAN?

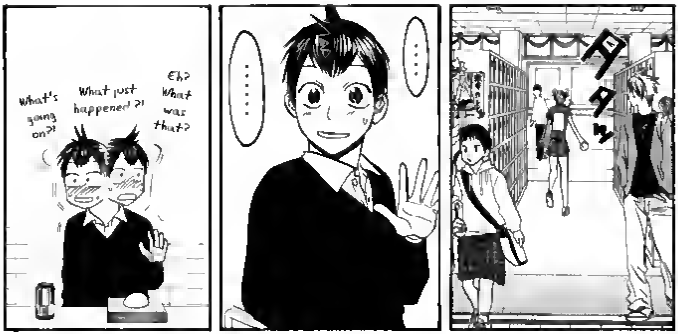



PROCESSING...
???

EI-CHAN BROKE~~~!! HE~~~Y!!

THEY SHOULD JUST GO OUT ALREADY.
GE...GEEZ, GOING ALL LOVEY DOVEY.
AYE AYE... GUESS YOU COULD CALL THIS BAD TIMING OR SOMETHING.
THE HARDER MARUO-KUN WORKS, THE FURTHER HE'LL BE DRIFTING AWAY FROM US
STILL THINKING
AHAHAHA
IF THEY'RE BOTH AIMING FOR THE SAME THING, THEY'LL ONLY GET CLOSER AND CLOSER
BUT IT'S ONLY NATURAL, RIGHT?
THE PERSON WHO'S THE CLOSEST MIGHT BE THE BEST
THEN WHY DON'T YOU GIVE UP AND FIND SOME-ONE ELSE?

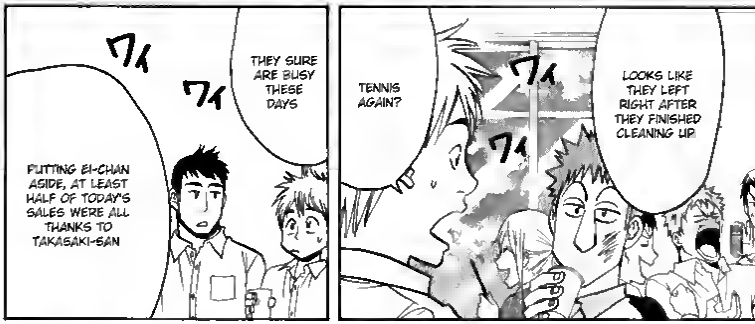
I GOTTA GO NOW.
They'll get mad
Ah
AH... THA-... THANKS FOR THE TREATS!!
!!
AH.... IT'S ALREADY TIME.
RGH ....
SURE....
NO PROBLEM THEN TELL ME THE ANSWER NEXT TIME
CONGRATS ON WINNING THE STC CUP!!
AH...ALSO,


What's going on?!
What just happened?!
Eh? What was that?
.....
.....
ガヤガヤ

WOAH, KAGEYAMA, WHAT'S WITH THAT FACE?
ドリフ
I'VE~~~ BEEN~~~ WATCH-ING~~~~

GOOD WORK WITH THE CULTURAL FESTIVAL!!
ALL STUDENTS, PLEASE FINISH CLEANING UP BY THE DESIGNATED TIME.
THE CULTURAL FESTIVAL IS NOW OVER.

PHEW~~ WE SOLD OUT ON THE MEAT BUNS, AND IT WAS A HUGE SUCCESS.
Chime girl was
THEY WERE HERE JUST A MOMENT AGO.
あはは
HUH? WHERE ARE NACCHAN AND EI-CHAN?


THEY SURE ARE BUSY THESE DAYS
PUTTING EI-CHAN ASIDE, AT LEAST HALF OF TODAY'S SALES WERE ALL THANKS TO TAKASAKI-SAN
TENNIS AGAIN?
LOOKS LIKE THEY LEFT RIGHT AFTER THEY FINISHED CLEANING UP.

WELL, WITHOUT A DOUBT, HE'S STILL AN HONOR STUDENT, BUT
WE CAN'T EXPECT AS MUCH FROM HIS NOTES AS WE USED TO.
I HEARD HIS PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN DROPPING A BIT, TOO.
It's the worst
Aha-haha
Awesome
BY THE WAY, IS EI-CHAN ALL RIGHT THESE DAYS?
NAH, IT SEEMS LIKE HE'S INTO TENNIS TOO MUCH THESE DAYS
WHAT?

OH, NO PROBLEM, NO PROBLEM. IN FACT, I THINK HE'S MUCH LIVELIER NOW THAN BEFORE.
?
HE HASN'T CHANGED A BIT.
IT'S JUST THAT HE FOUND A DIFFERENT PLACE TO WORK HARD ON.
STC

OKAY! 20 SECONDS,
PHEW
THE KANTOU PRELIMINARY FOR THE ALL JAPAN SELECTION IS IN ONE MONTH.
YOU'LL MOST LIKELY BE SELECTED AS ONE OF THE TOP 32 PLAYERS OF KANTOU.

THIS COMPETITION WILL BE FULL OF TOP LEVEL PLAYERS FROM VARIOUS PREFECTURES!!
THIS TIME, CATCH THESE KANTOU PLAYERS BY SURPRISE FROM A NO-SEED POSITION!!

YES, SIR!!

Do you remember me!?
I'm Koshimizu Nariyuki
Don't you remember playing me in the first round of the Junior Tennis circuit!?
Geez, even though we finally got a school-life scene, what's up with me not getting to show up at all...
Blah blah...

Baby Steps

THE DRAW FOR THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR INDOOR SELECTIONALS: KANTOU PRELIMINARY IS HERE.
AS EXPECTED, YOU HAVE ALL BEEN SELECTED.

#57 POWER TO TRANSFORM

*TL NOTE: VERY FAMOUS JAPANESE HIGHSCHOOL BASEBALL CHAMPIONSHIP.

RATHER THAN HOLD INDIVIDUAL PREFECTURE QUALIFIERS, THE TOP 32 JUNIOR PLAYERS OF EACH REGION ARE SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE REGIONAL PRELIMINARIES.

THEN ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR INDOOR SELECTIONALS IS THE SPRING CHAMPIONSHIP.

IF YOU WERE TO CONSIDER ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR AS THE SUMMER KOSHIEN* OF THE JUNIOR TENNIS WORLD,

I'M JUST GLAD THAT I'M ABLE TO PARTICIPATE

I BET YOUR RANKING WENT WAY UP!

ANIKI'S STC CUP 1ST PLACE SHOULD HAVE HELPED A LOT

HEHE, YESSS

NATSU IS 1ST SEED

Really~~

NATSU... THAT'S SOMETHING ONLY A SEEDED PLAYER GETS TO SAY

IN THE KANTOU REGION PRELIMINARY (GRADE 2), THE TOP 8 PLAYERS ARE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ALL-JAPAN INDOOR SELECTIONALS FINALS.

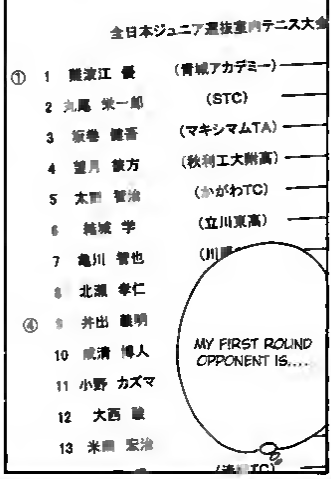
REALLY?

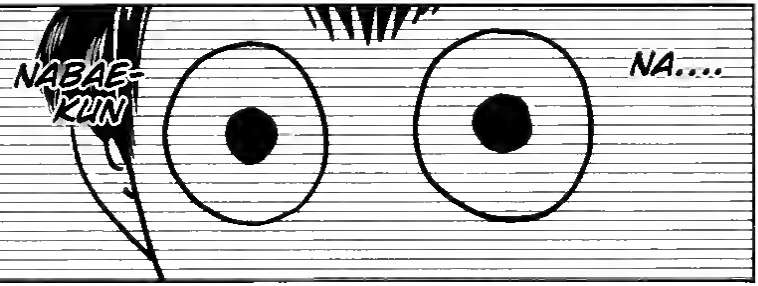
THIS IS A BIG CHANCE 'CAUSE YOU ONLY NEED TO WIN TWICE IN THIS COMPETITION TO GO TO THE NATIONALS

1 NABAE YUU

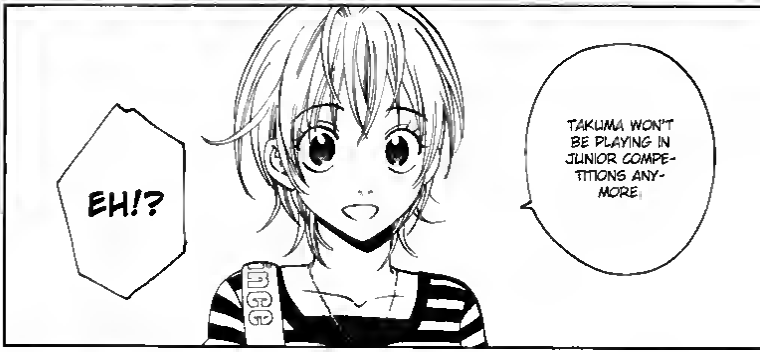
2 MARUO EIICHIRO

3





HUH? THAT'S RIGHT, WHY ISN'T TAKUMA-SAN THE 2ND SEED?
ARAYA-KUN IS 3RD SEED AND MIYAGAWA-KUN ISN'T SEEDED. ALL THE SEEDED PLAYERS HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR BEFORE.
How is it?
SINCE BOTH ANIKI AND I BARELY MADE IT INTO THE SELECTION, IT C'NT BE HELPED.
LOOK AT MINE TOO - MY 1ST OPPONENT IS THE 2ND SEED, OKADA-KUN.


EH!?
TAKUMA WON'T BE PLAYING IN JUNIOR COMPE-TITIONS ANY-MORE!

I... I SEE...
SO I WON'T BE ABLE TO PLAY HIM IN AN OFFI-CIAL MATCH ANY-MORE UNLESS I BECOME A PRO
I'M SURE HE'LL BECOME A PRO AFTER HE GRADU-ATES NEXT YEAR
TAKUMA'S A YEAR ABOVE US, SO HE'LL BE PARTICIPAT-ING IN STANDARD COMPETITIONS LIKE FUTURES OR CHALLENGER, WHERE PROS WILL BE PLAY-ING

All-Japan Jr.
Male 18 or above Championship
Eguwa Takuma vs Nabae Yuu
YOU BETTER TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
IT SHOULD AT LEAST MAKE FOR A GOOD REFERENCE.
I SAW NABAE-KUN'S 1ST ROUND MATCH TOO.
A VERY EFFICIENT TENNIS STYLE THAT TARGETS THE OPPONENT'S WEAK POINTS.
IS THAT SO?
BUT YOU SHOULD TREAT THAT MATCH AS JUST A REFERENCE, TOO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WELL, YOU'LL SEE.

EGAWA'S SECOND SERVE.

タタタッ
アン
PA-M
HE WASN'T HITTING SUCH STRONG SHOTS IN THE 1ST ROUND
HUH?
アン
HE WASN'T USING SUCH AN OFFENSIVE STYLE IN THE 1ST ROUND
IT- IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

ANYWAY, TAKING THE LEAD TAKES PRIORITY FOR HIM NOW.
BAM
BAM
IT WAS A MORE INTELLIGENT TENNIS WHERE HE WAITED FOR THE OPPONENT'S MISTAKES...
AND FINALLY AN OFFENSIVE FINISH
EVEN IF IT'S SLIGHTLY RISKY, HE'S FORCEFULLY MOVING HIMSELF UP
HE'S CREATING HIS OWN CHANCES WITH HIS FOREHAND
IT'S AS IF HE'S A TOTALLY DIFFERENT PERSON.
THIS STYLE IS SO UNLIKE THAT CALM AND COMPOSED NABAE-KUN.

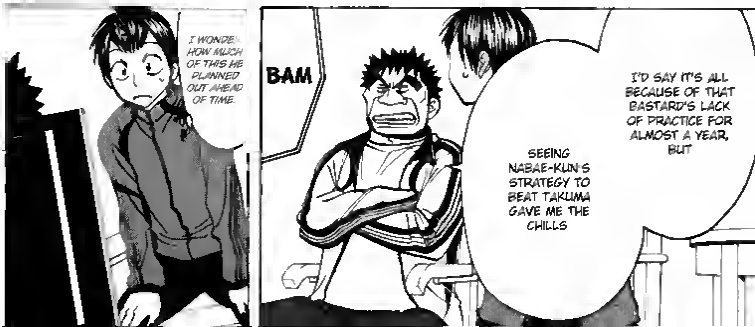
AH...
IT'S ONLY WHEN HE'S IN A MATCH.
NORMALLY HE'S NOT A DANGEROUS PERSON.

IT'S A LOT LIKE IKE-KUN'S TENNIS!!
BAM
THAT'S RIGHT... THIS

I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT EGAWA-KUN, TOO.
NO.
NO WAY
THEN WHY DIDN'T HE PLAY LIKE THAT FROM THE START?
IS THIS NAME-KUN'S TRUE PLAY STYLE?
BAM
I AGREE WITH YOU.
THE OVERALL STYLE... ESPECIALLY THE FORCEFUL APPROACH, IS DEFINITELY SIMILAR.
ALTHOUGH IT DOESN'T EVEN COME CLOSE TO IKE IN BOTH POWER AND TECHNIQUE.

BAM
BAM
He'll go that far...!!
HE MIGHT BE PLAYING WITH IKE'S STYLE JUST BECAUSE THE OPPONENT'S TAKUMA,
IN ORDER TO REMIND TAKUMA OF HIS BAD EXPERIENCES WITH IKE.

6—4
5—7
OF COURSE SINCE TAKUMA'S BEEN WORKING TO GET OVER IKE, HE SOMEHOW MANAGED TO TAKE THE SECOND SET.
I'M SURE TAKUMA HAD THE UPPER HAND THIS YEAR IN TERMS OF STRENGTH AND TECHNIQUE
BUT IN THE FINAL SET, TAKUMA'S FATIGUE FROM OVERDOING IT IN THE 2ND SET WAS CLEARLY EVIDENT.
BUT SEEING IKE'S STYLE MADE HIM INSTINCTIVELY FEEL WEAKER AND CAUSE HIM TO HAVE A LOT OF TROUBLE.

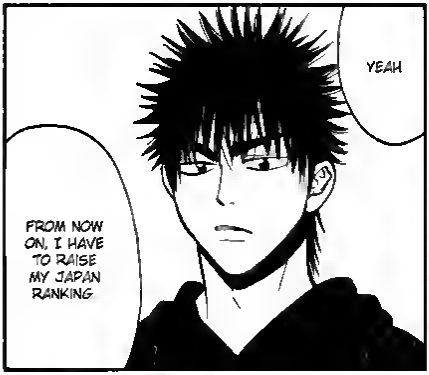

I WONDER HOW MUCH OF THIS HE PLANNED OUT AHEAD OF TIME.
BAM
I'D SAY IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THAT BASTARD'S LACK OF PRACTICE FOR ALMOST A YEAR, BUT
SEEING NABAE-KUN'S STRATEGY TO BEAT TAKUMA GAVE ME THE CHILLS

TAKUMA HAS A STRONG TENDENCY TO PREFER THE SERVE & VOLLEY STYLE THAT MAKES THE BEST USE OF HIS PHYSICAL ABILITY AND HIS BALL SENSITIVITY.
BUT NABAE-KUN CHANGES HIS STYLE BASED ON HIS OPPONENT.
HE POSSESSES THE POWER TO TRANSFORM.
THIS ISN'T SOMETHING A NORMAL PLAYER CAN DO EASILY.
YOU GET TO HAVE A WIDE SELECTION OF CARDS IN YOUR HAND ONLY IF YOU REACH A LEVEL WHERE YOU CAN SAY YOU'RE GOOD AT EVERYTHING.
AND FROM THERE, YOU GET TO FINALLY PICK A CARD TO PLAY ONLY WHEN YOU HAVE A SUFFICIENT AMOUNT OF DATA.
I GUESS IT'S A BIT SIMILAR TO YOUR STYLE, MARUO-KUN IN THAT IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY WEAK OR STRONG POINTS AND EMPHASIZES ON DATA COLLECTION
.....

NABAE-KUN'S TENNIS THAT CHANGES DEPENDING ON THE OPPONENT, WHILE AIMING FOR ALL-A
THEN HOW SHOULD I FIGHT HIM?
I WONDER WHAT HE THINKS HE'S STILL LACKING?
I'M AIMING FOR THAT ALL-A.
ALTHOUGH I STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO
AH!! TAKUMA-SAN.
DON'T LOOK AT THIS THING.

TAKUMA WON'T BE PLAYING IN JUNIOR COMPETITIONS ANYMORE
Ah

HEY! DON'T BE SO SELFISH!!
DO IT SOMEWHERE ELSE!!
I'm in a bad mood
...


YEAH
FROM NOW ON, I HAVE TO RAISE MY JAPAN RANKING

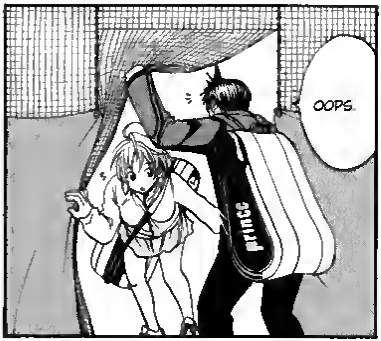
THAT'S RIGHT.
TAKUMA-SAN, YOU'RE NOT PLAYING IN JUNIOR COMPETITIONS, RIGHT?

AH.... UM....

IN THE END, WE NEVER HAD A SINGLE MATCH IN THE JUNIORS, DID WE?

CAN WE PLAY A MATCH?
HEAD
AS TAKUMA-SAN'S LAST JUNIOR MATCH ....
A SERIOUS GAME AS IF IT WERE AN OFFICIAL MATCH...

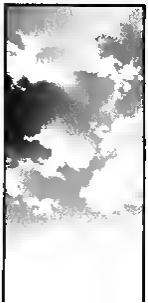
NO WAY.
Too much work
HEAD
NSAL
HEAD
U—M, I JUST CAN'T GET IN THE MOOD
Some other time
COME ON, IT'S JUST ONE MATCH!!
IT'LL BE SERIOUS!! I CAN DO A LOT BETTER THAN BEFORE, SO....
WH... WHY!?
.....
WHY NOT ..? EVEN THOUGH YOU LET ME PLAY BEFORE .....
HUH? UM... WAIT....


OOPS.

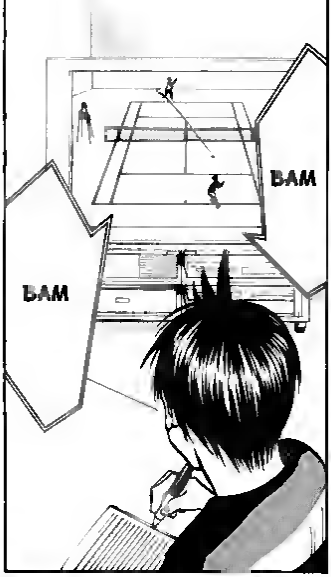
ALL RIGHT, MARUO-KUN! IT'S ABOUT TIME WE START PRACTICE.
WE'LL END WITH THE 30 SECOND RUNAROUND AGAIN TODAY
YES!

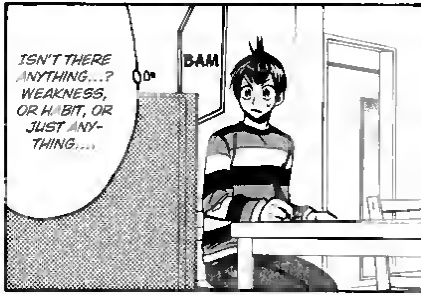
YEA

GOOD LUCK!



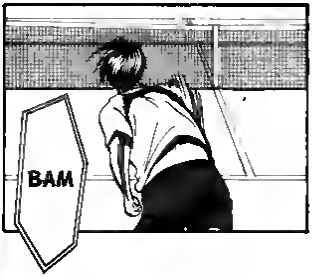
THAT'S QUITE A SURPRISE
全日本ジュニア選
① 1 鵜浦江 春
2 丸尾 崇一郎
3 桐地 健吾
4 道月 直方
5 太田 智治
6 鈴城 学
7 亀川 智也
8 北瀬 孝仁
④ 9 井出 雅明
10 成清 博人
11 小野 カズマ
12 大西 駿
WE TALKED QUITE A BIT
BUT WAS THERE ANYTHING THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR THE

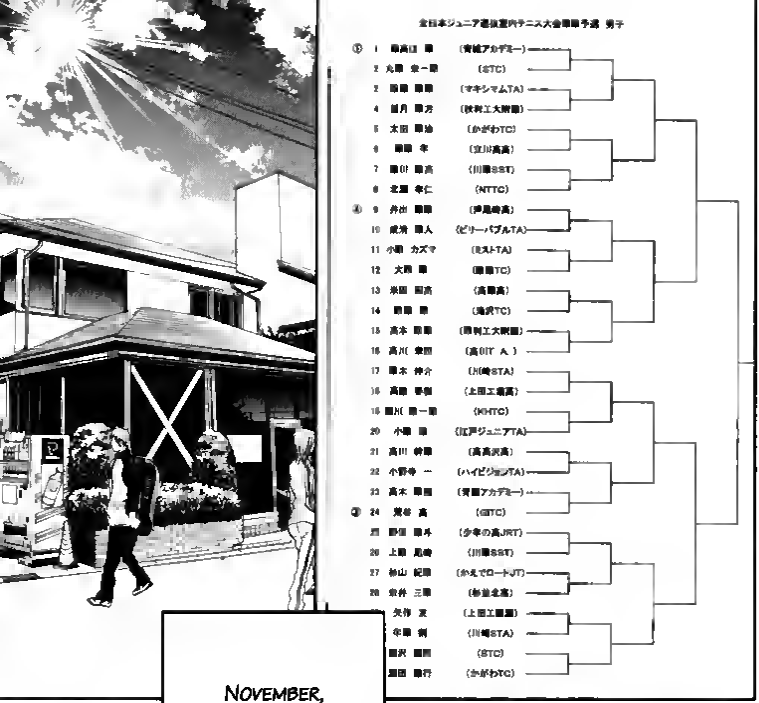

BAM
BAM


ISN'T THERE ANYTHING...? WEAKNESS, OR HABIT, OR JUST ANY-THING...
BAM

HUH?

BAM


BAM



NOVEMBER, FIRST DAY OF THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR INDOOR SELECTIONALS KANTOU PRELIMINARY.

IT'S ALMOST 9 O'CLOCK.

PLAYERS, PLEASE START WARMING UP AT YOUR DESIGNATED COURT.

#58 FIRST GAME

ザワ
ザワ
FINALLY, A MATCH WITH NABAE-KUN...
Campus

TWO WEEKS AGO
HUH?
トン
トン
BAM
JUST AS I THOUGHT.

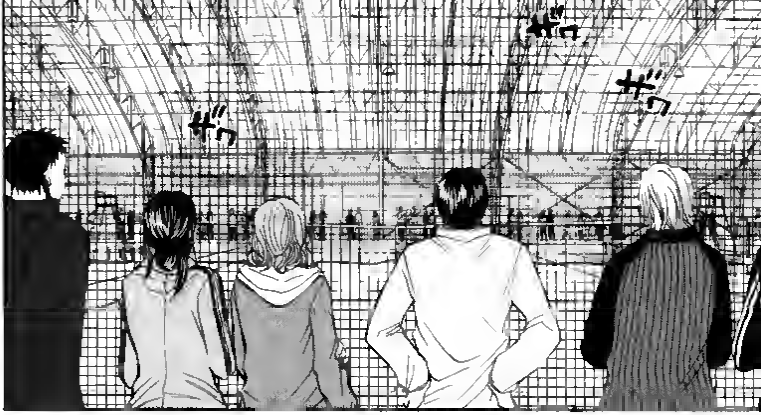
WHEN TAKUMA-SAN MAKES AN ACE, HIS ATTACK TONES DOWN MOMENTARILY.
ALTHOUGH HE'S PLAYING AGGRESSIVELY WITH IKE-KUN'S STYLE BECAUSE THE OPPONENT IS TAKUMA-SAN,

IT'S ONLY RIGHT AFTER TAKUMA-SAN MAKES HIS SIGNATURE SERVE AND VOLLEYS...

IS HE CALMING DOWN TO REGAIN HIS COMPOSURE?
BAM
HE'S INTIMIDATED?
NO... IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE IT...

THOUGH IT DOESN'T MEAN I'LL BE ABLE TO MOVE LIKE TAKUMA-SAN

THIS MIGHT BE GOOD TO KEEP IN MIND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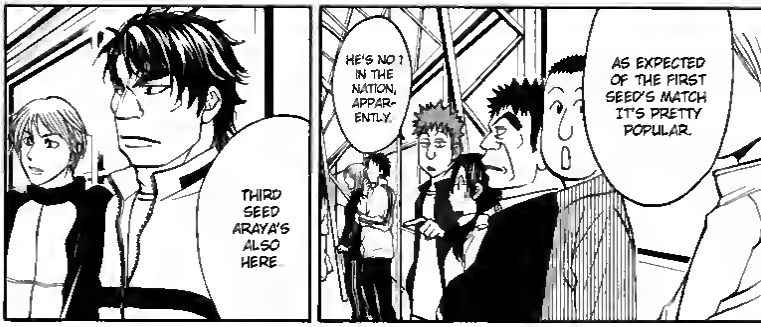
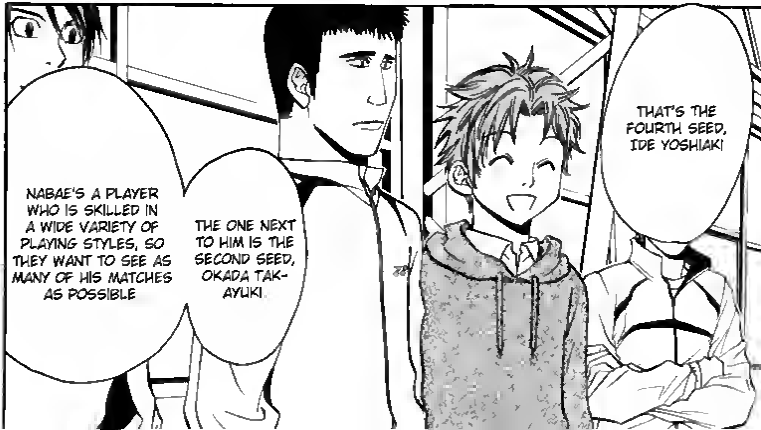

THIRD SEED ARAYA'S ALSO HERE.
HE'S NO.1 IN THE NATION, APPARENTLY.
AS EXPECTED OF THE FIRST SEED'S MATCH IT'S PRETTY POPULAR.


NABAE'S A PLAYER WHO IS SKILLED IN A WIDE VARIETY OF PLAYING STYLES, SO THEY WANT TO SEE AS MANY OF HIS MATCHES AS POSSIBLE
THE ONE NEXT TO HIM IS THE SECOND SEED, OKADA TAKAYUKI.
THAT'S THE FOURTH SEED, IDE YOSHIAKI

THEN THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO SEE SOMETHING TOTALLY UNEXPECTED.
EH?
LONG TIME NO SEE. LAST TIME WE MET WAS IN AUGUST.
YEAH
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO PLAY YOU IN THE FIRST MATCH
THANK GOODNESS I WAS ABLE TO TALK WITH MARUO-KUN FOR A BIT.
HUH?
IT'S EASIER FOR ME TO PLAY AGAINST SOMEONE I KNOW

LET'S HAVE A GOOD MATCH!

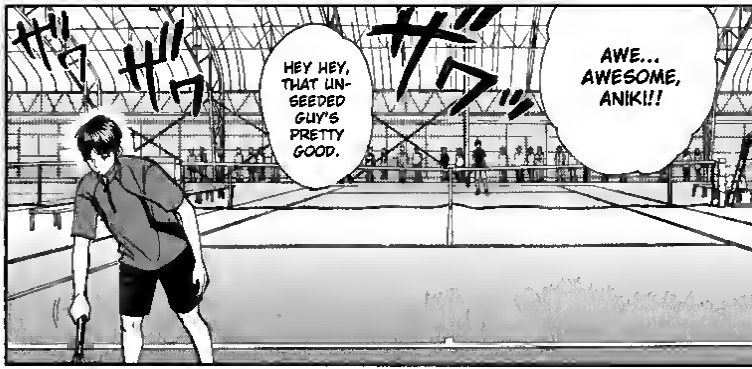
THE BEST OF THREE SETS. NABAE SERVE!

I CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE HERE JUST IN THE FIRST ROUND
NEXT YEAR, I'LL AIM TO BE A PRO AFTER WINNING THE ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR...
I DON'T HAVE ANY TIME TO SPARE
ドキ
ドキ
NO MATTER WHOM I'M UP AGAINST, IT DOESN'T MATTER

I'LL DEFI-NITELY WIN!!

HA
ALL RIGHT, IT'S SHALLOW!!
!
HA

ロブ!!!
HA
ドゴ
LOVE-15


AWE... AWESOME, ANIKI!!
HEY HEY, THAT UN-SEEDED GUY'S PRETTY GOOD.

HUH?
IT'S TOO SOON TO MAKE ANY JUDG-MENTS.
IT'S BEEN A MONTH SINCE THE STC CUP, AND THIS TIME WE MATCHED THE PEAK OF HIS BODY TRANS-FORMATION TO THIS FIRST MATCH.
THIS MATCH IS A GONER IF HE CAN'T PULL OFF AT LEAST THIS MUCH.

I'M ABLE TO KEEP A RALLY AGAINST THE NO.1 IN THE NATION... BUT...
THE MATCH HAS JUST START-ED!!
WHERE ARE THESE GOOD MOVEMENTS COMING FROM ?
prediction instinct reaction
HA

NABAE'S MOVING UP!
HA

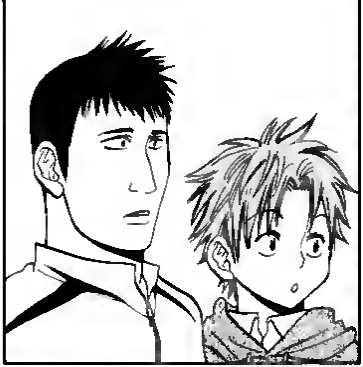
LOVE-30
YEAH
OH— HE'S GOOD AT BOTH OFFENSE AND DEFENSE.
HE'S PRETTY GOOD.
NOT YET. NABAE-KUN CURRENTLY HAS ALMOST NO DATA ABOUT ME.
THE REASON I'M GETTING POINTS RIGHT NOW IS SIMPLY BECAUSE I'M PLAYING BETTER THAN NABAE-KUN EXPECTED.
I CAN'T PREVENT NABAE-KUN FROM LEARNING MORE ABOUT MY STYLE AFTER EACH POINT.
IN THAT CASE, I HAVE TO EARN POINTS AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE RIGHT NOW...

HIS REACTIONS ARE FAST!

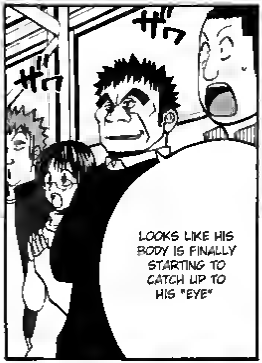
YP
PERFECT!!

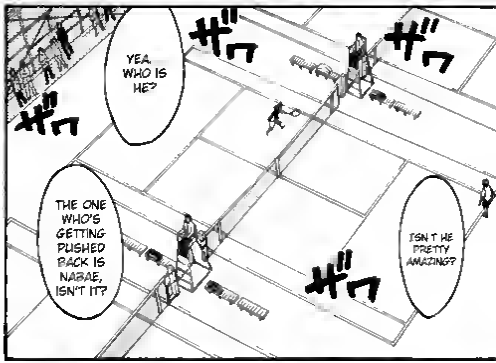
110
アン

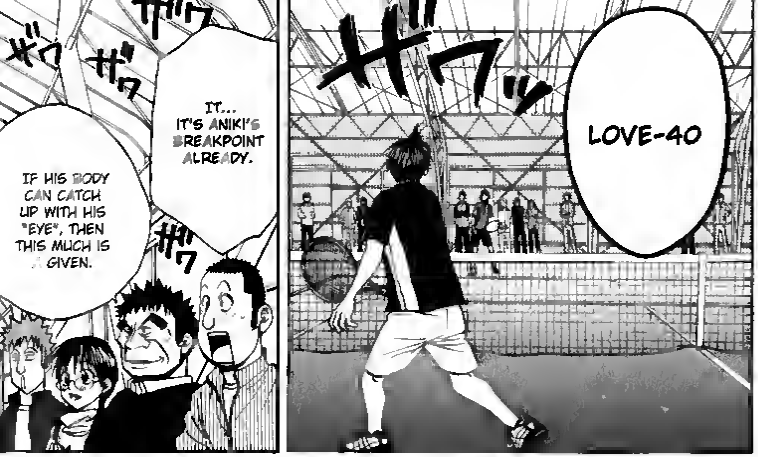
RETURN DASH!!



LOVE-40

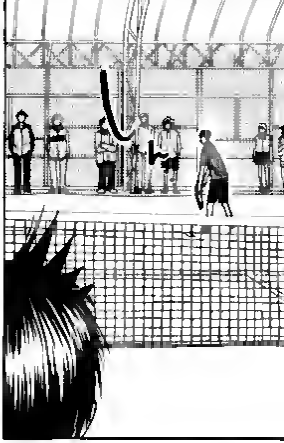

LOOKS LIKE HIS BODY IS FINALLY STARTING TO CATCH UP TO HIS "EYE"


YEA, WHO IS HE?
THE ONE WHO'S GETTING PUSHED BACK IS NABAE, ISN'T IT?
ISN'T HE PRETTY AMAZING?


IT... IT'S ANIKI'S BREAKPOINT ALREADY.
IF HIS BODY CAN CATCH UP WITH HIS "EYE", THEN THIS MUCH IS GIVEN.
LOVE-40

#59 ACCUMULATION
LOOKS LIKE HE'S THE REAL DEAL.
WELL, IT'S MORE INTERESTING THAT WAY.

I CAN STILL GO ON .. I HAVE TO GET AS MANY POINTS AS POSSIBLE WHILE I CAN.



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え!!

AS I SUSPECTED, HIS REACTIONS ARE QUICK.
HIS EYES MUST BE GOOD.
RETURN DASH AGAIN!!
HA
THIS PATTERN IT'S QUITE TROUBLESOME.

A SOLID, STABLE ALL-ROUNDER.
HIS VOLLEYS ARE GOOD, TOO... BUT HE WON'T ATTACK UNLESS GIVEN A CHANCE.
HA
TCH
HOW ABOUT THIS?

HA
GAME, MARUO. 1-0!
ALL RIGHT.
OHHHH!! THE NO SEEDER MADE A BREAK IN A LOVE GAME!!
AMAZING!
GOOD WORK, ANIKI!!
SERIOUSLY? ... EVEN CONTENT-WISE, MARUO HAS THE UPPER HAND.

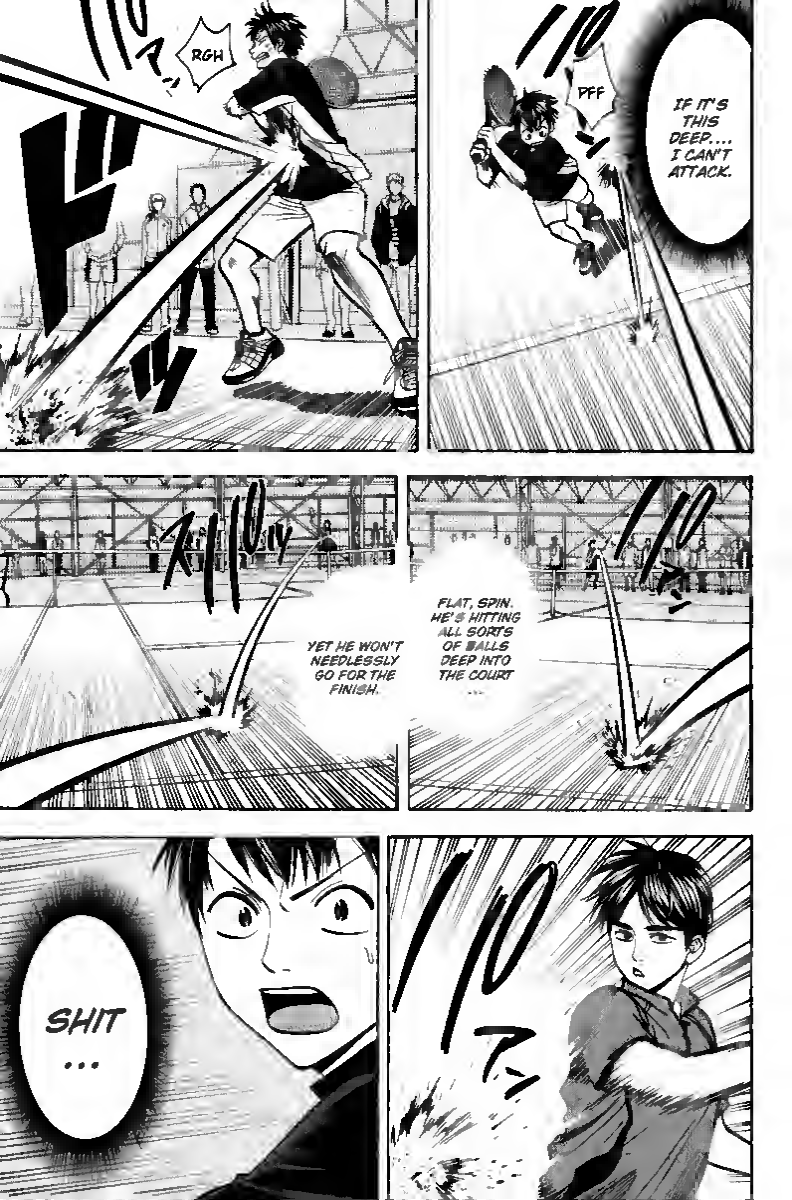
HE GOES FULL POWER ON A SMASH.
I'M ABLE TO WIN POINTS IN QUICK FINISHES SO FAR, SO GOOD.
SERVICE DASH!!
I HAVE TO AIM FOR QUICK FINISHES ON MY SERVICE GAME TOO, SO.

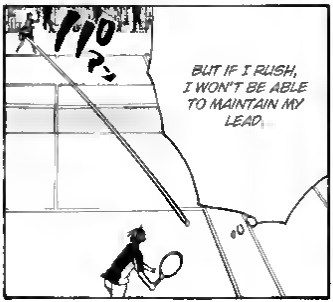
WOW

LOVE-15
...TCH

RIGHT NOW, I HAVE THE SERVING ADVANTAGE, SO I SHOULD AVOID TAKING RISKS.
MOVING FORWARD RIGHT AFTER THE SERVE IS TOO RISKY.
HE WON'T ALLOW THAT.
IT'S LIKE A FAST PICKOFF THROW*.
NOW WE CAN'T ADVANCE FORWARD CARELESSLY.

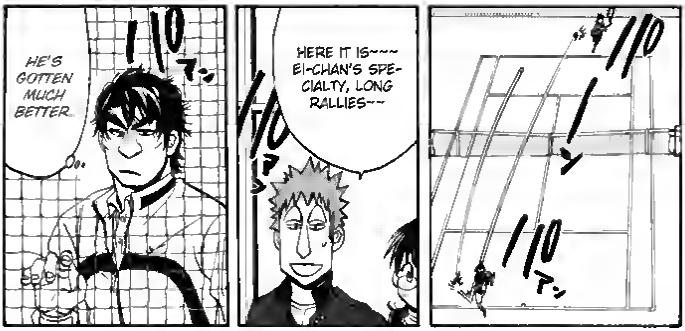
*T.L NOTE: REFERRING TO BASEBALL.

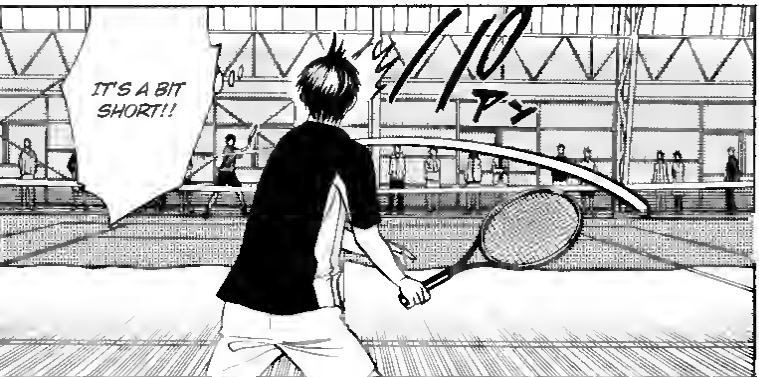

RGH
PFF
IF IT'S THIS DEEP... I CAN'T ATTACK.
FLAT, SPIN. HE'S HITTING ALL SORTS OF BALLS DEEP INTO THE COURT ...
YET HE WON'T NEEDLESSLY GO FOR THE FINISH.
SHIT ...

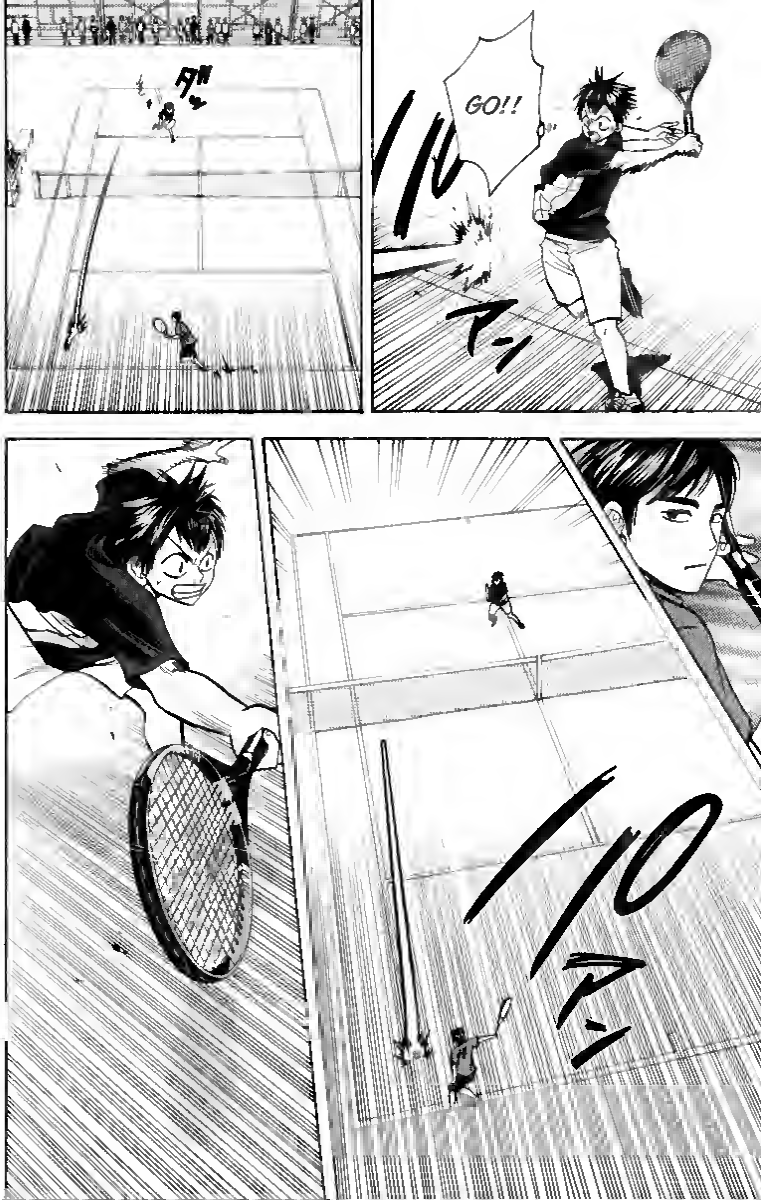


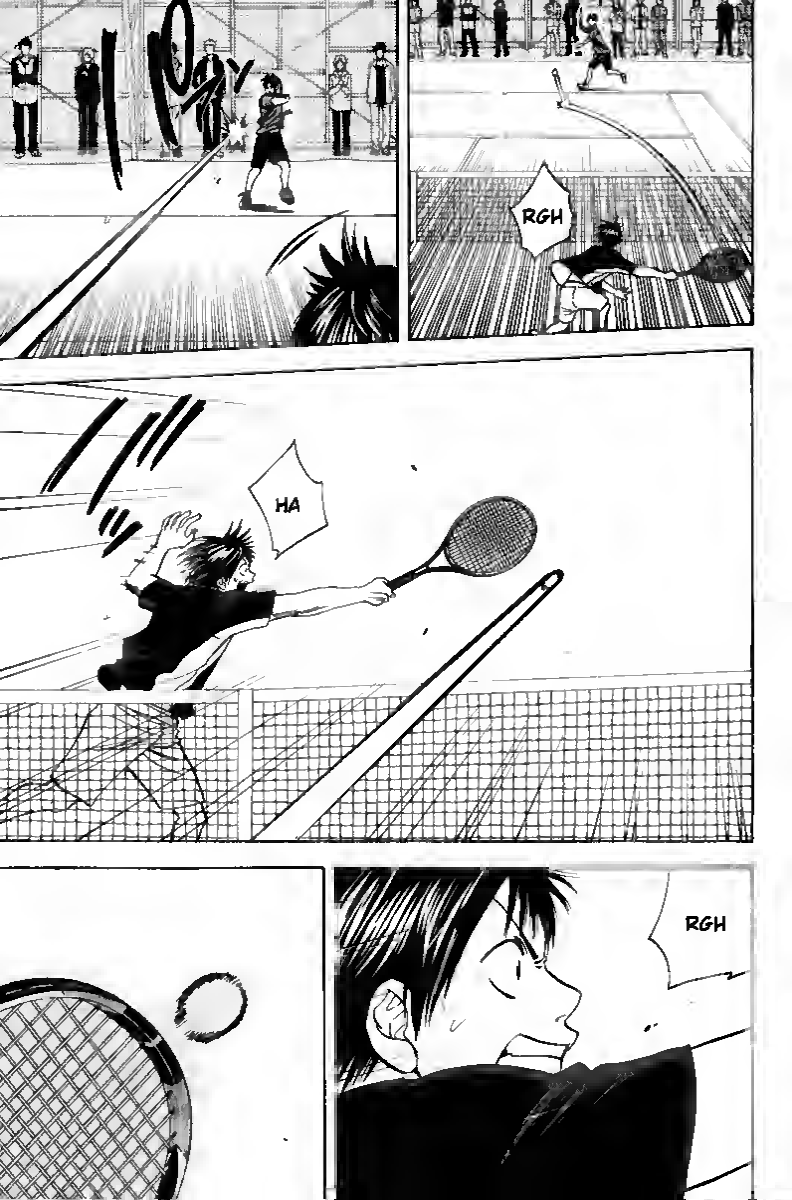
			MARUO EIICHIRO
Mentality		nd	?
		gement	?
		Ability	?
Technique	Forehand	Topspin	?
		Flat	?
		Slice	?
	Backhand	Topspin	?
		Flat	?
		Slice	?
	Serve	Spin	?
		Flat	
		Slice	
		Spin	
		Flat	

IN NEITHER SKILLS, MIND, NOR FITNESS,
I CAN'T SHOW HIM ANY SIGN OF WEAKNESS


HE'S GOTTEN MUCH BETTER.
HERE IT IS~~~ EI-CHAN'S SPECIALTY, LONG RALLIES~~
110
110
110


IT'S A BIT SHORT!!
110


GO!!

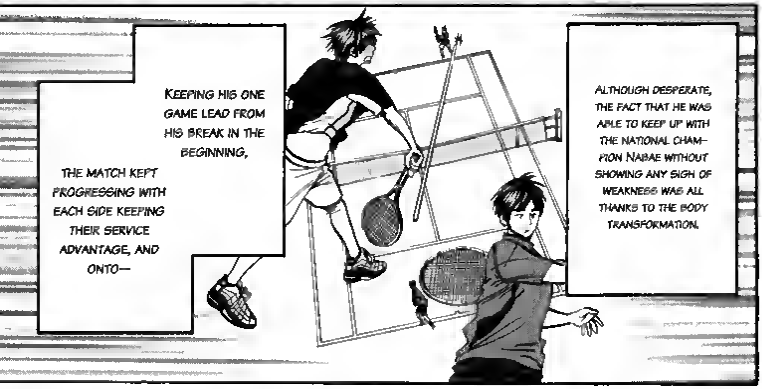

RGH
HA
RGH

OUT!
15-ALL
ALL RIGHT!!

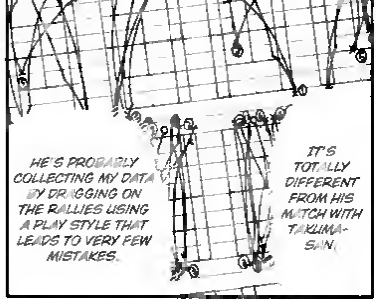
HE DIDN'T LET GO OF THE ONE AND ONLY CHANCE. I HOPE HE'LL JUST BEAT HIM
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
JUST WISHFUL THINKING.

NARAE, YOU ALMOST HAD IT!!
PRETTY GOOD OFFENSE FROM MARUO, TOO

AS EXPECTED OF A "WANT-TO-BE PRO"
AND THERE'S NOTHING HE'S PARTICULARLY BAD AT.
NO SIGN OF ANY RUSHED REACTION.
EVEN AFTER THIS MANY RALLIES, HIS BREATHING'S STILL STABLE.


KEEPING HIS ONE GAME LEAD FROM HIS BREAK IN THE BEGINNING,
THE MATCH KEPT PROGRESSING WITH EACH SIDE KEEPING THEIR SERVICE ADVANTAGE, AND ONTO—
ALTHOUGH DESPERATE, THE FACT THAT HE WAS ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE NATIONAL CHAMPION NABAE WITHOUT SHOWING ANY SIGN OF WEAKNESS WAS ALL THANKS TO THE BODY TRANSFORMATION.

EIICHIRO WAS PUTTING UP A FIGHT THAT NO ONE HAD EXPECTED
2-1
NABAE 1
MARUO 2


HE'S PROBABLY COLLECTING MY DATA BY DRAGGING ON THE RALLIES USING A PLAY STYLE THAT LEADS TO VERY FEW MISTAKES.
IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM HIS MATCH WITH TAKUMA-SAN.

THE PROBLEM IS WHAT HE'LL DO FROM NOW ON...
HE'S STARTING OFF WITH A SIMPLE YET EFFECTIVE STRATEGY...

TILL NOW, NABAE-KUN'S BEEN MORE OR LESS DEFENSIVE.
カキ
カキ

WHAT DO I HAVE THAT NABAE-KUN DOESN'T HAVE!?

IF I THINK ABOUT IT IN THAT WAY, NABAE-KUN'S STYLE THAT AIMS FOR ALL-A IS IN SOME SENSE MY IDEAL FORM.
IN THAT CASE... I FEEL LIKE I WON'T BE ABLE TO BEAT NABAE-KUN IF I DON'T HAVE SOMETHING AT WHICH I'M BETTER THAN HIM...
.....SOMETHING...

HOW'S NABAE-KUN ANALYZING ME?
GOOD OR BAD, I'M STEADFAST ON THE BASICS... I DON'T HAVE ANY PARTICULAR WEAK OR STRONG POINTS
I'M NOT REALLY DOING IT CONSCIOUSLY, BUT THAT'S JUST HOW MY TENNIS IS

I WAS ABLE TO CONFIRM MY EARLIER INTUITION.
A NOTE-BOOK? SOUNDS LIKE ME.
WHERE HAVE I SEEN THIS BEFORE?
ON HIS COMPUTER WHILE DOING SOME RECON?
I GOT THE GIST OF IT NOW.
ゴク…

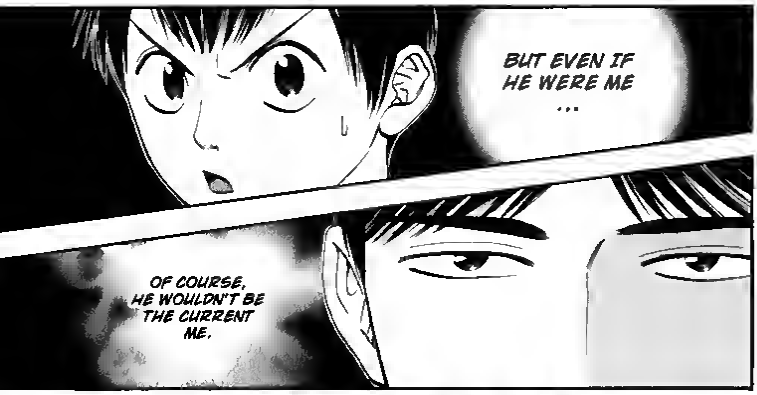
YOU'RE A LOT LIKE ME.

I'VE PRACTICALLY NEVER MET SOMEONE LIKE THIS BEFORE
BUT IF THAT'S THE CASE, THEN THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE
TIME!

MARUO-KUN IS A LOT LIKE ME ...

#60 IDEAL

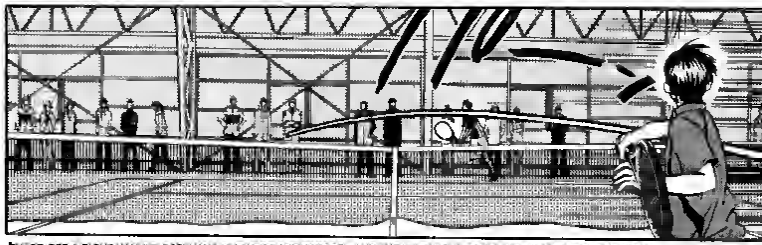
I
NABAE 1
MARUO 2


BUT EVEN IF HE WERE ME ...
OF COURSE, HE WOULDN'T BE THE CURRENT ME.

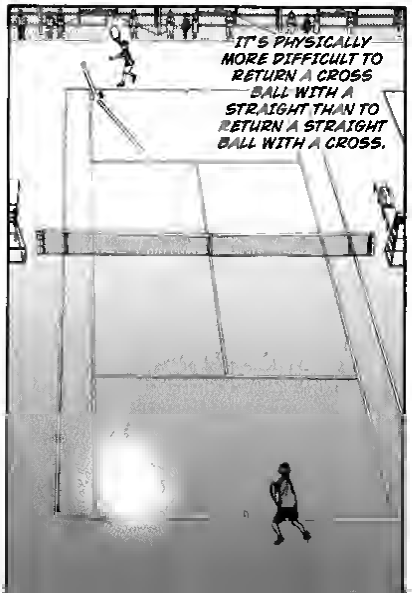
ﾊｰﾝ!
KWA!

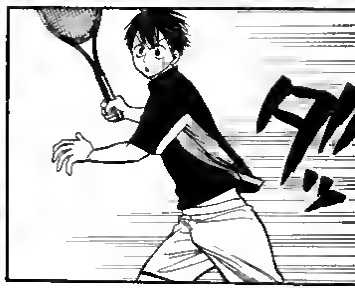
HA
ﾊｰﾝ!
HE'S THE ME FROM THE PAST, THE ONE WHO HAD NO DOUBTS IN THE "BASIC" STYLE
AND WHO FOCUSED SOLELY ON MASTERING IT.

MARUO-KUN'S STYLE IS NOTHING MORE THAN THE BASICS RIGHT NOW.
JUST ONE PATTERN AMONG AN INFINITE NUMBER OF "BASIC STYLES" THAT VARY WITH TIME.



*NOTE: FOR A RIGHT HANDED FOREHAND, THE LEGS ARE CROSSED AND THE LEFT LEG IS POSITIONED IN FRONT OF THE RIGHT.





HA
OUT. LOVE-15
ARGH- SO CLOSE
CRAP I WAS TOO FORCEFUL
THE BASICS AREN'T ALL RIGHT THERE ARE WEAKNESSES THAT COME FROM BEING TOO STEAD-FAST

HA
HA
110マイル
110マイル
HA
IS HE LETTING ME HIT?
HE'S BEEN LEAVING THE STR. LIGHTS OPEN THE WHOLE TIME
MARUO'S MOVING UP!

!!
RGH
LOVE
-30

DID NABAE-KUN'S TRANSFORMATION START ALREADY?
IT WASN'T THE FINISHING STROKE, BUT HE'S ACCUMULATING POINTS BY AIMING AT UNCOMFORTABLE PLACES.
BECAUSE HE'S USING A DOWN-TO-THE-BASICS CONTINENTAL GRIP.
HE FINDS IT HARD TO VOLLEY THE BALLS NEAR HIM DESPITE HITTING WITH HIS DOMINANT ARM
IT'S SHALLOW !!
!!
JUST LIKE THE BASICS, HE DOESN'T HESITATE TO MOVE UP ON A SHALLOW BALL.
IN THIS SITUATION, THE PRUDENT CHOICE FOR HIM WOULD BE TO STAY AWAY FROM HITTING STRAIGHTS, SINCE HE MADE A MISTAKE BEFORE AND DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO MOVE.

HA
HE'S READING MY MOVES
BEING TOO HONEST ON THE COURT CAN SOMETIMES BE A BAD THING
LOVE-40

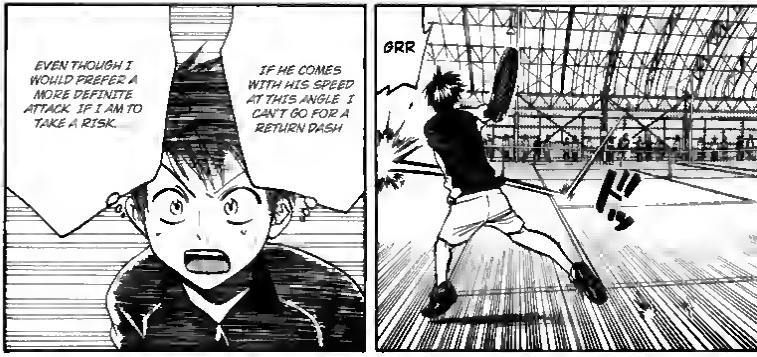
BREAK POINT.... HE'S ALMOST CAUGHT UP ALREADY.

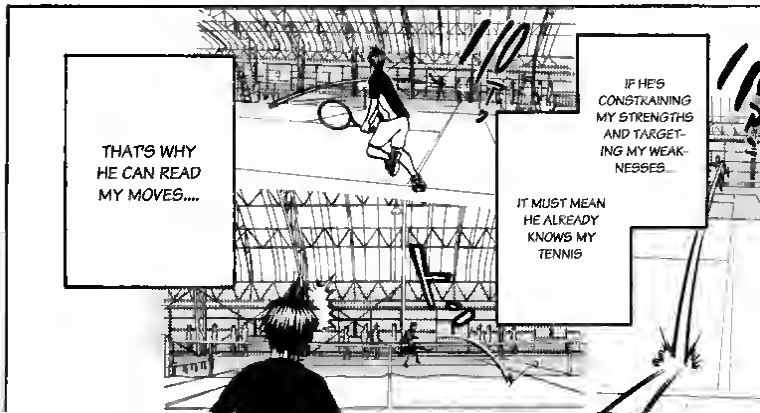
HA
A HIGH LOB ON THE BACKSIDE...
IT SHOULD BE DIFFICULT WITH THAT FORM.
A SAFE CROSS IF THE BALANCE IS OFF
AGAIN!!

GAME, NABAE: 2-2.
NABAE BREAKS!!
WE'RE SEEING MORE AND MORE NABAE-LIKE POINTS!!
IT'S MY RETURN, SO I SHOULD STAY BACK AND WAIT FOR MY CHANCE— NO,
HE'S COMPLETELY READING MY MOVEMENTS
HA
I SHOULD FIGHT BACK ANTICIPATING THE RISK!!

15-LOVE
THERE WILL BE AN OPENING IF HE HESITATES EVEN FOR A MOMENT
HE'S READING MY MIND, TOO!?

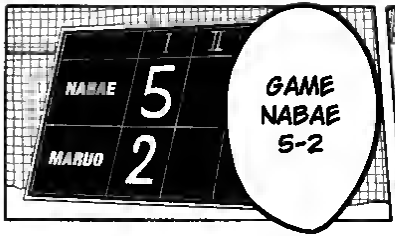
IS THE ALL-JAPAN CHAMPION-SHOWING HIS TRUE POWERS!?
MARUO-KUN...

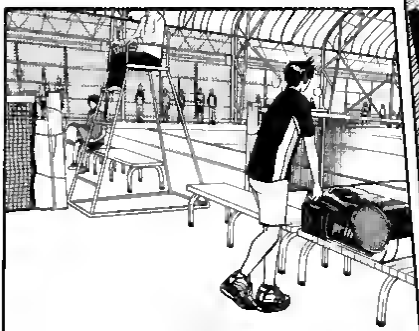

EVEN THOUGH I WOULD PREFER A MORE DEFINITE ATTACK IF I AM TO TAKE A RISK...
IF HE COMES WITH HIS SPEED AT THIS ANGLE I CAN'T GO FOR A RETURN DASH
GRR


THAT'S WHY HE CAN READ MY MOVES....
IF HE'S CONSTRAINING MY STRENGTHS AND TARGETING MY WEAKNESSES...
IT MUST MEAN HE ALREADY KNOWS MY TENNIS

HE DEFINITELY HAS SOME NICE WEAPONS,
BUT HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO USE THEM YET.
MAYBE HE'S INEXPERIENCED?
EVEN THOUGH HE'S ATTACKING PRETTY WELL AND REACTING QUITE NICELY....
IT'S EVEN MAKING ME WONDER
IF MARUO IS ALREADY TRAPPED IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND.
THAT ASIDE, NABAE'S QUITE TERRIFYING.
IN JUST A FEW GAMES HE COMPLETELY STRIPPED AN OPPONENT HE FACED FOR THE FIRST TIME,
AND ACCURATELY SELECTED THE STYLE THAT WOULD BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE AGAINST HIM.
3
2
HE'S DEFINITELY GOT WHAT IT TAKES TO BEAT TAKUMA.
SO UNLUCKY.
FOR SUCH A GUY TO BE BORN IN OUR GENERATION ...
NAH, WE'RE SO LUCKY.
わくわく

NABAE YUU!!


I II
NABAE 5
MARUO 2
GAME NABAE 5-2



10

I HAVE TO PATCH THESE UP AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE DURING THE MATCH.
AGAIN... I STILL HAD SO MANY HOLES.
SOMEHOW... IT FEELS LIKE NABAE-KUN KNOWS ME WAY BETTER THAN I KNOW MYSELF.
IT'S PRETTY UNBELIEVABLE, BUT THAT'S WHAT THE RESULTS ARE SHOWING.
THEN EVEN JUST TRYING TO COME UP WITH A STRATEGY MIGHT BE TOO DANGEROUS.
IF HE CAN REALLY SEE RIGHT THROUGH ME ALREADY,

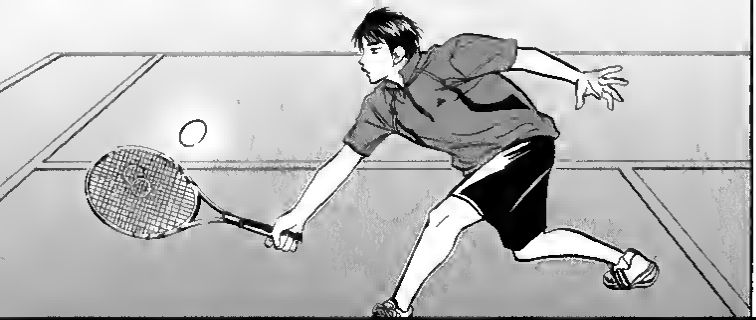
カッ
カッ
TIME!
ISN'T THERE ANYTHING?
A SIMPLER WAY TO OVERCOME NABAE-KUN ....
SOMETHING I'M BETTER AT REGARDLESS OF EXPERIENCE ...
SOMETHING!!

110ア
HA
110ア
…
!!
DROP SHOT!!
カッ
FOR-WARD!!
ヨッ
OH…

ANIKI MOVED UP TOO!!
INTERESTING

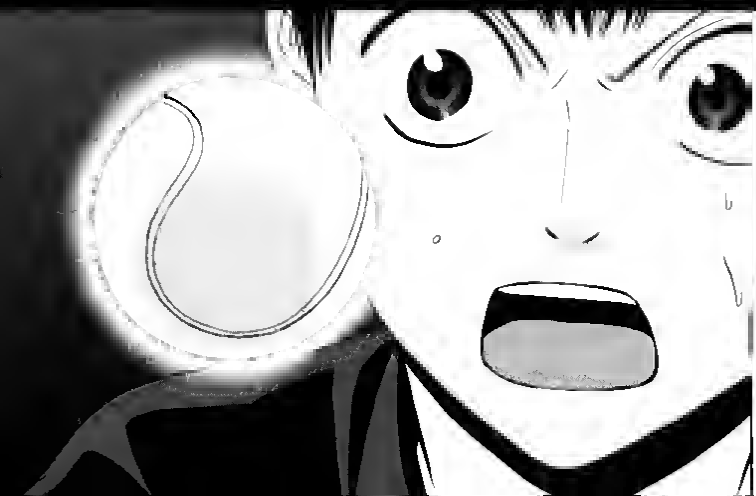
FOR-
WARD
!!
#61 RATIONALITY TO FIGHT
ANIKI
MOVED
FORWARD,
TOO!!

VOLLEY
BATTLE!!



WHEN IT COMES TO CLOSE COMBAT...

"YOU'VE GOT SOME PRETTY GOOD EYES"

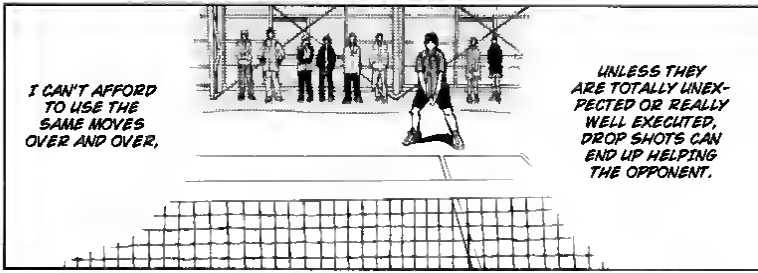


HA
FU

HA
15-LOVE
YESSS!!

H-...HEY, AMAZING... HE TOTALLY OVERWHELMED NABAE!!
N...NO WAY... WASN'T THAT JUST A FLUKE?
BUT HE WAS REACTING PROPERLY!!
VOLLEY BATTLES ARE BATTLES OF THE EYES
RATHER THAN STRATEGY OR TECHNIQUE, THE BATTLE IS DECIDED BY THE SPEED OF YOUR REACTIONS
HE DECIDED TO SIMPLY FIGHT WITH HIS STRONG POINTS. THAT'S SOME GOOD JUDGEMENT
FOR REAL?
HE DEFI-NITELY SAW EVERYTHING
EVEN NABAE COULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED THIS

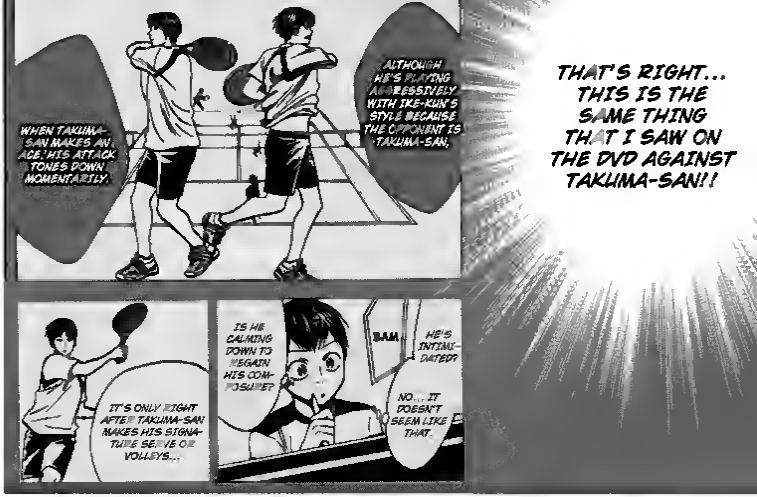
...I'D LOVE TO BELIEVE THAT, BUT
ALL RIGHT..!! I MANAGED TO FIND ONE PATTERN OF ATTACK.

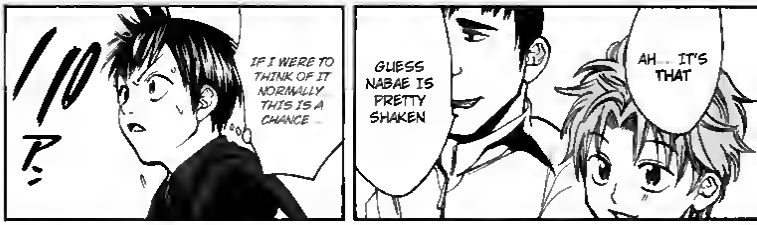

I CAN'T AFFORD TO USE THE SAME MOVES OVER AND OVER,
UNLESS THEY ARE TOTALLY UNEXPECTED OR REALLY WELL EXECUTED, DROP SHOTS CAN END UP HELPING THE OPPONENT.

HA

BUT IT MUST HAVE MADE HIM CAUTIOUS AND MORE HESITANT.
IT SHOULD NOW BE EASIER FOR ME TO KEEP MY LEAD.

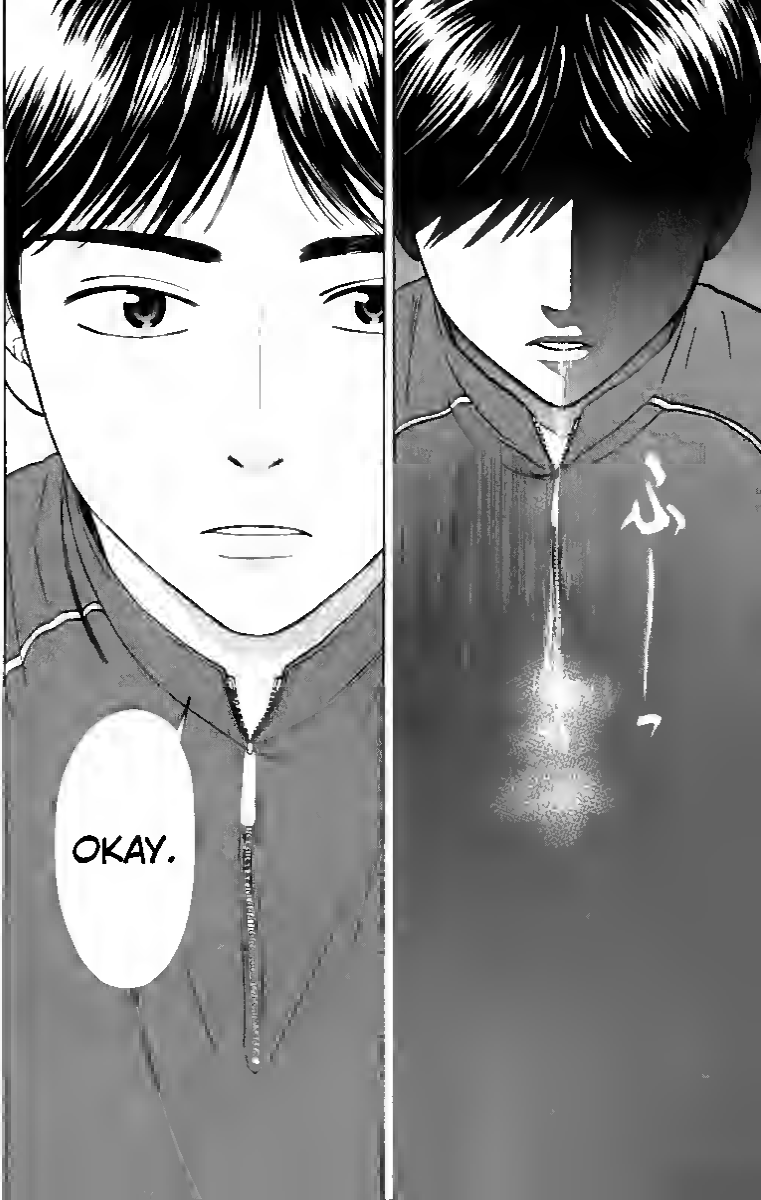
HA
HUH!?
WHA... WHAT? WHAT IS THIS ..?
IT'S TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM WHEN HE WAS HITTING TO UNCOMFORTABLE PLACES
HE'S AIMING FOR THE CENTER WITH A CONSTANT, TONED DOWN TEMPO.
IT'S NEITHER A RECUPERATING, DEFENSIVE TENNIS, NOR AN AGGRESSIVE ONE.


THAT'S RIGHT... THIS IS THE SAME THING THAT I SAW ON THE DVD AGAINST TAKUMA-SAN!!
ALTHOUGH HE'S PLAYING AGGRESSIVELY WITH IKE-KUN'S STYLE BECAUSE THE OPPONENT IS TAKUMA-SAN,
WHEN TAKUMA-SAN MAKES AN ACE, THIS ATTACK TONES DOWN MOMENTARILY.
IT'S ONLY RIGHT AFTER TAKUMA-SAN MAKES HIS SIGNATURE SERVE OR VOLLEYS...
IS HE CALMING DOWN TO REGAIN HIS COMPOSURE?
BAM
HE'S INTIMIDATED?
NO... IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE THAT.


!?
IF I WERE TO THINK OF IT NORMALLY, THIS IS A CHANCE...
GUESS NABAE IS PRETTY SHAKEN
AH... IT'S THAT

HA
IF YOU AREN'T GOING TO ATTACK, I WILL!!

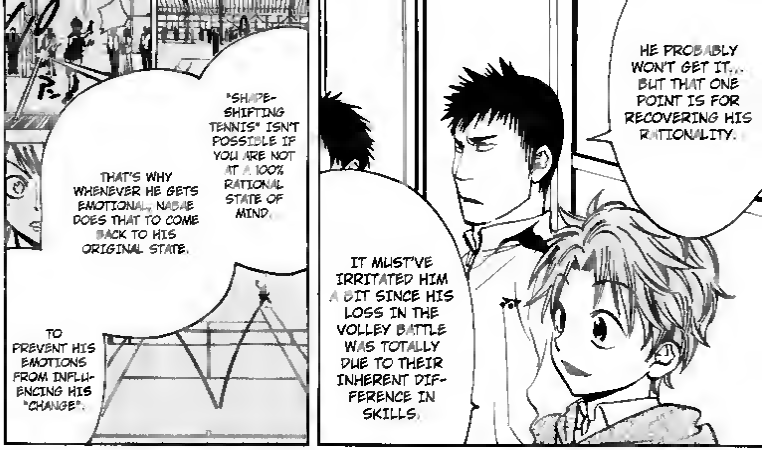
HA
30-LOVE
I CAN PULL THROUGH THIS ONE!! BUT... WHAT'S HE GOING TO DO NOW?
AMAZING!! EI-CHAN MADE TWO POINTS IN A ROW!!
ALL RIGHT!!


OKAY.

KEEP ATTACK-ING!!
HA

GRR

OUT.
30-15
A...AGAIN. HE'S BACK TO ATTACKING UNCOMFORTABLE AREAS...
MOREOVER, IT'S MUCH MORE ACCURATE THAN BEFORE.
WHAT WAS THAT, THEN? THAT LAST POINT?
IN THE DVD, IT WAS RIGHT AFTER TAKUMA-SAN GOT AN ACE.
THIS TIME, IT'S RIGHT AFTER LOSING A POINT IN THAT VOLLEY BATTLE.
HE CHANGES HIS PLAY STYLE RIGHT AFTER SOMETHING UNEXPECTED HAPPENS...
BUT... WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THAT?


"SHIFTE-SHIFTING TENNIS" ISN'T POSSIBLE IF YOU ARE NOT AT A 100% RATIONAL STATE OF MIND.
THAT'S WHY WHENEVER HE GETS EMOTIONAL, NABAE DOES THAT TO COME BACK TO HIS ORIGINAL STATE.
TO PREVENT HIS EMOTIONS FROM INFLU-ENCING HIS "CHANGE".
IT MUST'VE IRRITATED HIM A BIT SINCE HIS LOSS IN THE VOLLEY BATTLE WAS TOTALLY DUE TO THEIR INHERENT DIF-FERENCE IN SKILLS.
HE PROBABLY WON'T GET IT... BUT THAT ONE POINT IS FOR RECOVERING HIS RATIONALITY.

IN SHORT, NO MATTER HOW UNSTABLE HE GETS, AS LONG AS HE CAN GO BACK TO HIS ORIGINAL STATE, NABAE CAN ONCE AGAIN TURN INTO ANYBODY HE WANTS.
THAT IS SOME-THING TOTALLY RIDICULOUS.
BECAUSE IT MEANS HE CAN COMPLETELY RECOVER HIS MENTAL STATE AS LONG AS HE LOSES ONE POINT.
NABAE-KUN'S PROBABLY THE ONLY HIGH SCHOOLER WHO CAN CONTROL HIS EMOTIONS DURING A MATCH TO SUCH A DEGREE OF PERFECTION.

I WONDER WHAT HE'LL DO AGAINST SUCH AN OPPONENT ...
HOW ABOUT NOW!?
GRR

NO GOOD... HE'S KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON THE DROP SHOTS.
30-ALL
SOMETHING I CAN BEAT NABAE-KUN AT.
I ALREADY FOUND ONE, SO
IF I LOSE THIS GAME, I'LL LOSE THE FIRST SET.
BEFORE THAT... ISN'T THERE ANYTHING?
HA
THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING ELSE!!

#62 CHOICES

Baby Steps

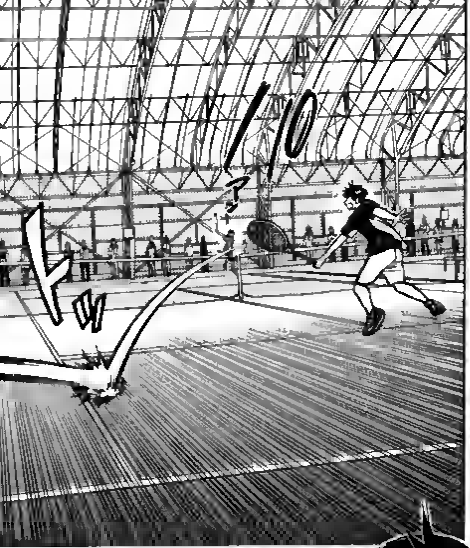
I MADE IT !!
HEY, HEY, HOW IS IT!?
HUH? NACCHAN, YOU FINISHED THE FIRST ROUND ALREADY?
YEAH, I WAS ABLE TO BREEZE THROUGH IT
WOW
HE'S PLAYING PRETTY WELL,
BUT THE OPPONENT IS STRONG AS EXPECTED
IT'S THE FIRST SET, 5-2, WITH 30-30, NABAE'S LEAD

HA
I'M ABLE TO KEEP UP WITH THE BALLS, BUT HE'S SLOWLY CORNERING ME
HE MUST BE GOING FOR A WEAKNESS I'M NOT AWARE OF
30-40
ARGH

DOES HE HAVE ALL MY DATA!?
IF I DON'T COME UP WITH SOMETHING ... ..
I'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING...
SOMETHING THAT GOES BEYOND NABAE-KUN'S DATA, JUST LIKE THAT VOLLEY BATTLE
I'LL JUST CONTINUE LOSING LIKE THIS!!
.... TCH

THEN HOW ABOUT ME?
IN THIS KIND OF SITUATION, TAKUMA-SAN RELIES ON SERVES & VOLLEYS,
AND ARAYA-KUN HAS HIS COUNTER!
WHEN I'M IN REAL TROUBLE, WHAT SHOULD I USE TO FIGHT BACK?

WITH WHAT...


EI-CHAN?

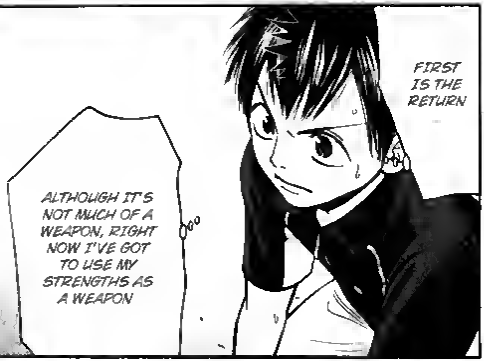
ALL RIGHT! NICE, NABAE! GOOD WORK, GOOD WORK.
HIS TENNIS REALLY IS FLAWLESS
FIRST SET WON BY NABAE. COUNT: 6-2.

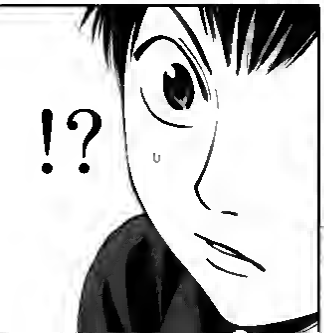
SINCE HE REACTS QUICKLY HIS DEFENSIVE AREA IS LARGER THAN IT SEEMS
ALTHOUGH IT'S SLIGHT, HE'S STARTING TO COVER HIS WEAKNESSES TOO

GOOD LUCK, MARUO!!
STRIKE BACK IN THE SECOND SET!!

WHAT SHOULD I DO?
U—M...
I DON'T WANT TO LET HIM MOVE FORWARD, EITHER...
IT'S FINE TO KEEP IT THIS WAY, BUT IT WILL DRAG ON FOR A BIT.
TIME
ISN'T THERE SOMETHING I CAN DO RIGHT NOW?
IN A HIGH LEVEL MATCH LIKE THIS, I DON'T HAVE ANY WEAPON I CAN RELY UPON.
AND THERE'S NO OTHER WAY TO CHALLENGE HIM IN A BATTLE OF REACTIONS
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO FORCE A VOLLEY BATTLE EVERY TIME

SECOND SET.


FIRST IS THE RETURN
ALTHOUGH IT'S NOT MUCH OF A WEAPON, RIGHT NOW I'VE GOT TO USE MY STRENGTHS AS A WEAPON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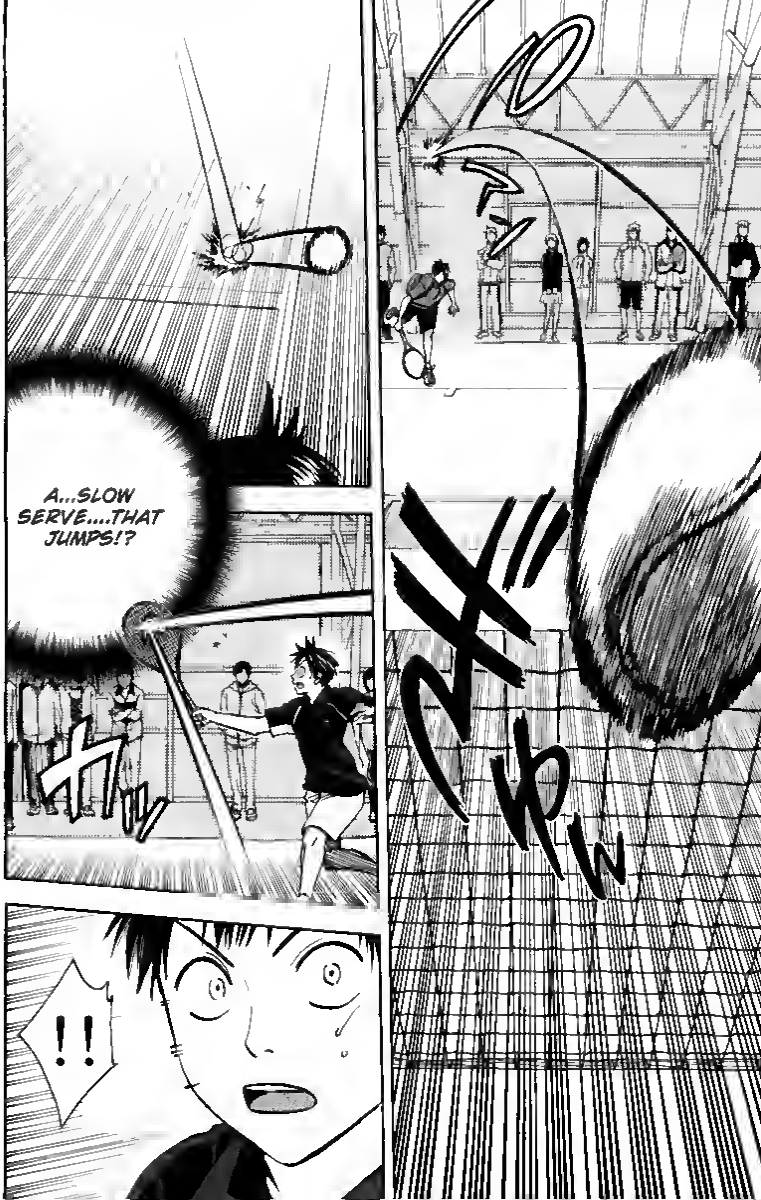
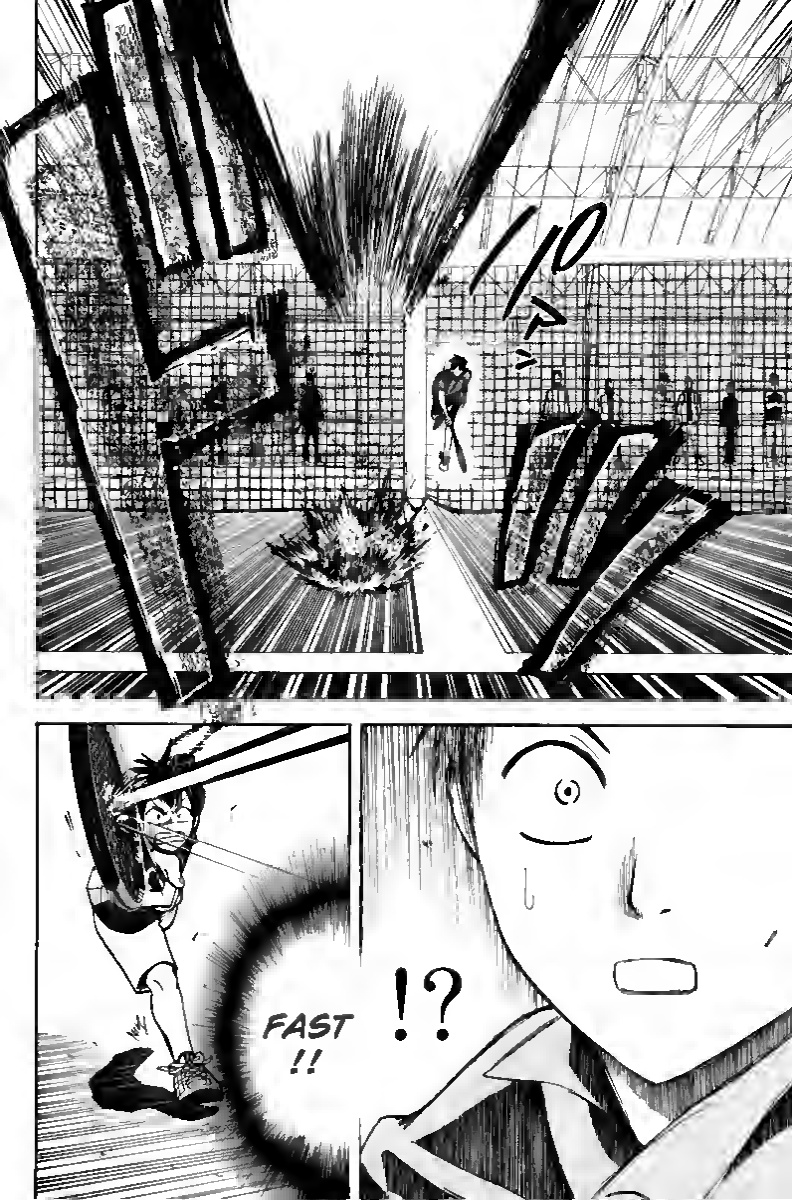

A...SLOW SERVE....THAT JUMPS!?
!!

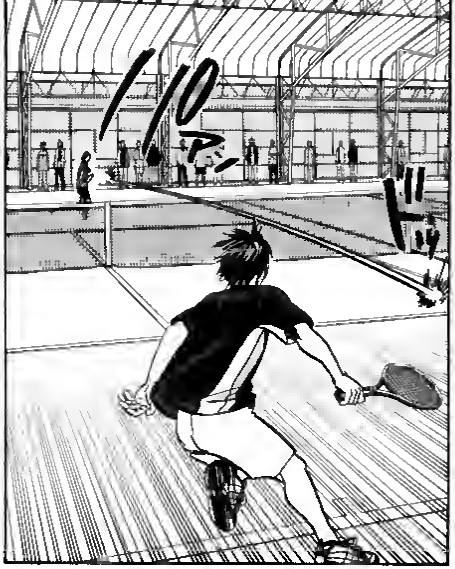
!!
FRONT!!
SERVE & VOLLEY!?
!!!
ミシッ

15-LOVE
EVEN THOUGH HE'S IN THE LEAD, HE CHANGED HIS PLAYING STYLE!?
HE'S COMING FOR THE KILL.
IT'S GOING TO BE TOUGH IF HE SUDDENLY CHANGES THE TEMPO LIKE THAT.
NABAE
DASH WITH A LOW, SINKING RETURN.
MARUO
...NO, WAIT A SEC
IF I CAN GO FOR A GOOD RETURN DASH, I CAN TURN IT INTO A VOLLEY BATTLE.
IF IT'S SERVE & VOLLEY, I MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO IT!!

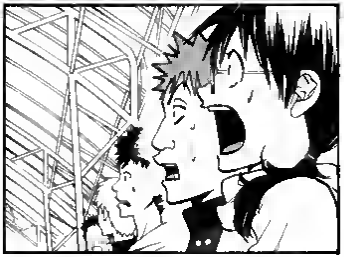
AND... I'M USED TO SERVE & VOLLEY PLAYS.
THE OPPONENT WAS ALWAYS THE JUNIOR'S BEST USER
....
THERE'S NO WAY HE'D BE BETTER THAN TAKUMA-SAN!!


FAST
!!
!?

30-LOVE



REALLY? IT SEEMED LIKE A TAKUMA-SAN CLASS SERVE...
NO, IT'S NOT REALLY FAST COMPARED TO TAKUMA.



IT SIMPLY LOOKS LIKE THAT BECAUSE OF THE GAP FROM THE PREVIOUS ONES.

INCRED-IBLE
HE... HE CAN LAND SUCH A FAST SERVE, TOO.

EH!? ARE YOU SAYING HE WAS GOING EASY 'TILL NOW?
WRONG. I'M SAYING HE'S MIXING UP HIS SERVES
HE'S PRODUCING THE SAME EFFECT AS A BIG SERVER BY CHOOSING, FROM A WIDE RANGE OF POSSIBLE CHOICES, A SERVE THAT'S BEST SUITED FOR THE SITUATION
ERK
TSH
40-LOVE
I CAN'T GO FOR A VOLLEY BATTLE WITH THIS... IT'S A SERVE & VOLLEY TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM TAKUMA-SAN...
THIS TIME IT HARDLY BOUNCED AT ALL!!

HA
GAME 1-0.
NABAE LEAD,
SECOND SET.
EVEN THOUGH HE'S NOT A SERVE & VOLLEY PLAYER, IT'S A SUPER A CLASS SERVE & VOLLEY
ARE YOU TELLING ME HE HAS EVEN MORE SUCH HIGH-LEVEL CARDS UP HIS SLEEVE?
HE DOESN'T LET ME HIT A PROPER RETURN

I II
NABAE 6 1
MARUO 2 0
MEAN-WHILE, I SHOULD...
ANYWAY, I'VE GOT TO KEEP THIS SERVE GAME NO MATTER WHAT.

IS IT THE FULL-POWER NABAE THIS TIME!?
WHA... WHAT WAS THAT RETURN!?
NABAE'S TENNIS HAS STILL GOT A LOT LEFT IN IT!!
HE SWITCHED GEARS AGAIN!!

YEAH, SINCE HE ACTUALLY HAS QUITE A BIT OF POWER, TOO... IT'S JUST THAT HE DOESN'T USE IT MUCH
IT'S RARE TO SEE HIM GO FULL-POWER
IN OTHER WORDS, HE KNOWS HOW TO USE IT.
IF IT WERE ME, I'D HAVE LOST MY DESIRE TO FIGHT RIGHT THERE

I CAN'T GRASP HIS LIMITS.

THIS IS...
THIS IS NABAE YUU ...
THE NATION'S NO.1!!

!!
HE USED DEFENSIVE TENNIS TO UNCOVER WEAKNESSES THAT I WASN'T EVEN AWARE OF.
THEN SWITCHED TO AN EFFICIENT TENNIS STYLE ATTACKING THOSE POINTS ONE BY ONE
!!
AND AS I WAS TRYING TO COME UP WITH A WAY TO COUNTER IT, HE SHAKES ME ONCE AGAIN WITH A HIGHLY VOLATILE SERVE & VOLLEY.
ONCE WE MOVED INTO THE 2ND SET, HE LAUNCHED THE FASTEST HARD SHOT OF THIS MATCH SO FAR.
THIS IS THE POWER OF "TRANSFORMATION"—
#63 A SHRED OF DOUBT

THIS IS THE NATION'S NO.1
NABAE YUU!!

HA
WHAT SHOULD I DO!?

I II III IV V
NABAE 6 1
MARUO 2 0

HE'S HITTING FROM THE BASELINE AT A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SPEED FROM BEFORE, AND WITH AMAZING ACCURACY...
I CAN DEAL WITH IT AS LONG AS MY EYES CAN GET USED TO IT, BUT...
LOVE-30
GRR
カ!!!
ハァ
ハァ

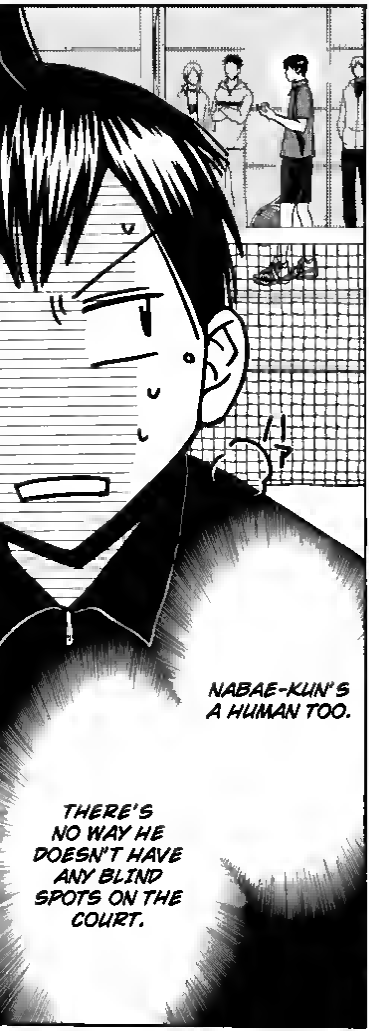
BUT EVEN THEN . EVEN IF I CAN SEE IT, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO ATTACK . ?
SHIT BUT I'M STARTING TO SEE IT
HA
ハァ
ハァ

IN A SITUATION WHERE I DON'T HAVE ANY WEAPON THAT CAN WORK AGAINST THAT LEVEL OF AN OPPONENT...
ハァ
ハァ
ハァ
ハァ

MARUO-KUN...
ANIKI...
GUESS HE'S TOTALLY FALLEN IN THE PIT.
ERK
OUT! GAME, NABAE 2-0, SECOND SET.

CAN'T BEAT NABAE-KUN
oooo
AT THIS RATE... THE CURRENT ME
NACCHAN!
YOU-CAN-WIN!!

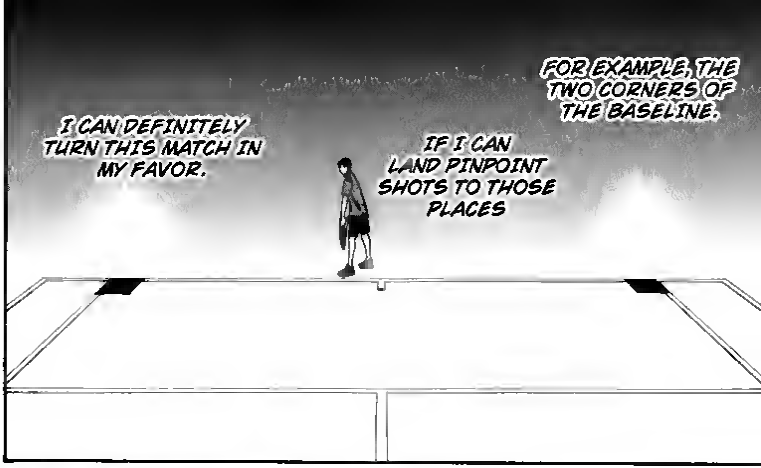
E...EVEN IN THIS SITUATION? NO WAY.... WITHOUT EVEN A SINGLE SHRED OF DOUBT ...!?
EHHHHHHHH~~~~!?
THAT'S RIGHT... SHE DEFINITELY HAS MUCH MORE EXPERIENCE THAN I DO.
NO... SHE MUST BE SAYING THAT 'CAUSE SHE UNDERSTANDS THE SITUATION ...
.... SHE'S RIGHT.


NABAE-KUN'S A HUMAN TOO.
THERE'S NO WAY HE DOESN'T HAVE ANY BLIND SPOTS ON THE COURT.

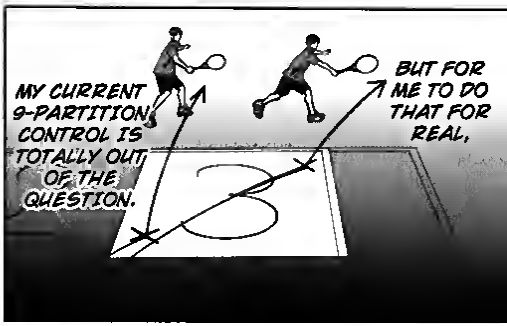
NO MATTER HOW I THINK, SHE'S THE ONE WHO'S CORRECT.
SHE'S RIGHT IF I'VE GOT THE TIME TO THINK "I CAN'T WIN" DURING A MATCH I SHOULD INSTEAD COME UP WITH SOMETHING
IT'S NOT OVER YET, SO THERE'S STILL A CHANCE

IT'S TRUE THAT THE SITUATION IS HOPELESS...
I'VE BEEN THINKING FOR QUITE A WHILE, BUT I CAN'T COME UP WITH ANY SOLID PLAN TO COUNTER THE "SHAPE-SHIFTING TENNIS"....
TENNIS STRONG ENOUGH TO BE THE NUMBER ONE OF JAPAN ISN'T SIMPLE ENOUGH TO BE BROUGHT DOWN BY PETTY PLANS THOUGHT UP ON THE SPOT.

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN I SHOULD GIVE UP.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY I CAN'T OPTIMISTICALLY BELIEVE IN VICTORY LIKE NACCHAN...

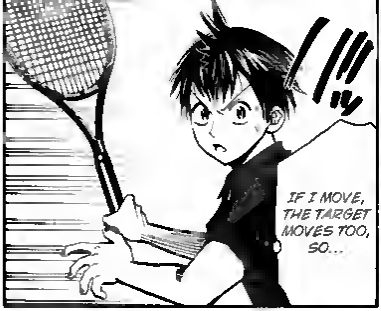

I CAN DEFINITELY TURN THIS MATCH IN MY FAVOR.
IF I CAN LAND PINPOINT SHOTS TO THOSE PLACES
FOR EXAMPLE, THE TWO CORNERS OF THE BASELINE.

IT ACTUALLY REQUIRES THE LEVEL OF CONTROL I WROTE IN MY NOTES ONCE
IT'LL BE LIKE THIS RIGHT!!


MY CURRENT 9-PARTITION CONTROL IS TOTALLY OUT OF THE QUESTION.
BUT FOR ME TO DO THAT FOR REAL,

I'VE GOT TO NARROW-DOWN MY AIM EVEN MORE...

HUNDRED-PARTITION IS EVEN HARSHER,
I HAVE TO GO THAT FAR
BUT
SO, SAY... IF I WERE TO SPLIT MY NORMAL 9-PARTITION INTO ANOTHER 9 PARTS... IF I WERE TO AIM FOR THE CENTER OF THAT, THE RISK OF AN OUT INCREASES BY THIS MUCH.
EXTENT OF THE CURRENT 9-PARTITION CONTROL
OUT
OUT
OUT
IN
IN
OUT
IN
IN
OUT
EXTENT OF THE CURRENT 9-PARTITION CONTROL
AIM FOR THIS
INSIDE OF THE COURT
IF I'M GOING TO LOSE ANYWAY, I MIGHT AS WELL DO WHATEVER I CAN!!


!!!
IF I MOVE, THE TARGET MOVES TOO, SO...

!!
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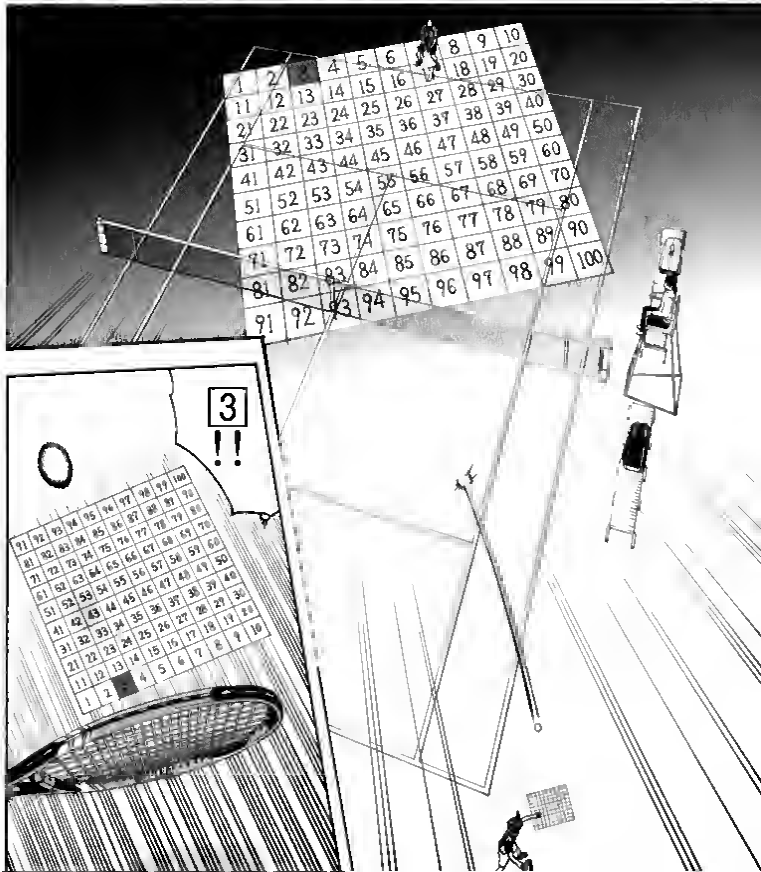
3
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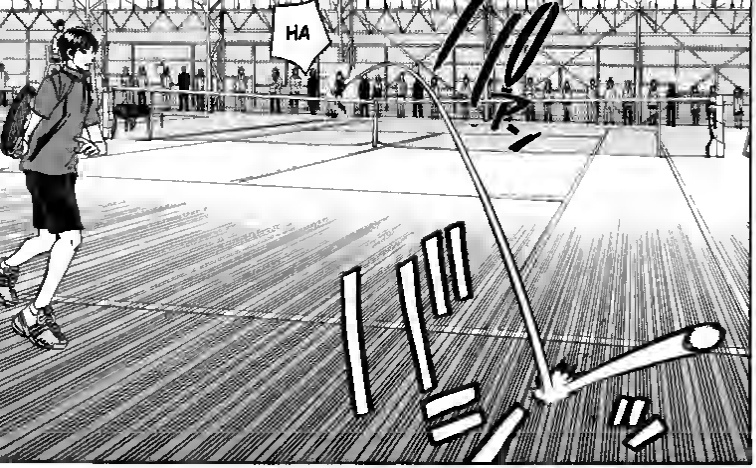
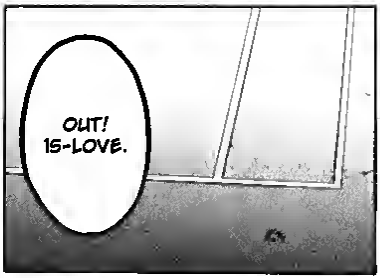

HA

AH~
CLOSE.
...


OUT!
15-LOVE.

...

!?
!?

EVEN THOUGH MY AIM WAS OFF ONLY BY A BIT...
EVEN THOUGH I WAS ABLE TO SWING THE WAY I WANTED...
THIS IS PRETTY TOUGH...
IT'S HARD!!

TCH
IS HE TRYING TO DRASTI-CALLY CHANGE SOME-THING?
IT'S A MISS VERY UNLIKE STABLE MARUO-KUN

!!
S...SIMPLY RETURNING IT IS THE BEST I CAN DO!!
A FLAT SLICE!!
UH
THIS TIME, IT'S A HARD SHOT!!
HA
I CAN'T CONTROL DOWN TO A 1100 TARGET AGAINST THESE!!

SO I HAVE TO GET INTO POSITION AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE!
I'D HAVE TO GET TO THE BALL, STOP, AND THEN HIT AT THE RIGHT TIMING...
TO TIME MY RACKET FOR A HIT!!
パーン
THEN STOP, FOR A FIRM AIM.
FIRST, GET TO THE BALL!!

FINALLY, AT THE RIGHT TIMING, HIT...
HA

!!
IT'S WEAK!!
CHANCE!!

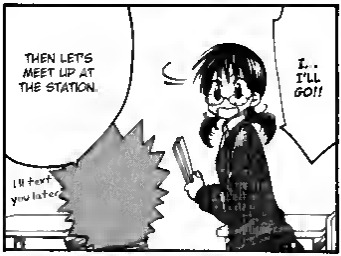
OPEN COURT!!
HA
ドッ

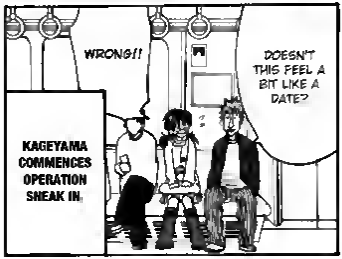
15-ALL
ALL RIGHT!
ALL....
ALL RIGHT!!
TO BE CONTINUED IN VOL 8

Baby Steps

Too short?
Waitress

KAGEYAMA'S PLAN





THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BUYING BABY STEPS VOLUME 7.

HELLO, THIS IS KACHIKI

VOLUME 7 WAS MOSTLY NABAE'S STORY
NABAE SEEMS TO BE THE ONLY ONE I CALL WITH A "-SAN", AND WHEN I WAS WONDERING WHY "NABAE-SAN" SOUNDED SO FITTING, A MEMBER OF OUR STAFF SHOUTED "IT HAS THE SAME SOUNDS AS 'SAZA"-SAN'!"
I SEE.
EVER SINCE THEN I'VE BEEN DRAWING THIS MATCH WITH SA""E-SAN'S OPENING SONG STUCK IN MY HEAD

ANYWAY, SEE YOU NEXT VOLUME TOO!
SEE YOU LATER
ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS! UFUFUFU

imangascans.org

iMANGA scanlation

imangascans
rc.rchighway.net

Baby Steps

ベイビーステップ

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